

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY
(*CINQ MARS*)



ALFRED DE VIGNY

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(Cinq Mars)

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF
ALFRED DE VIGNY

BY
MADGE PEMBERTON

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The Spider and the Fly (Cinq Mars) ALFRED DE VIGNY
Translated by Madge Pemberton.

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PART I

CHAPTER I

FAREWELLS

Do you know that land men have thought fit to name as "The garden of France?" If ever you have idled summer days away in Fair Touraine, you will be no stranger to the glamour of the River Loire as she beckons you with her eternal question: "On which side of my shores wilt thou dwell for evermore, thou and thy beloved, far away from city folk and all their ways? Wouldst have a country with a smiling face? Follow my right-hand bank and see." And so you wind your way beside its yellow tide, and slowly-moving waters, and everywhere abundant life is at your feet; on the valleys, with their little white houses; on the hill-sides all golden with vines, or white with the bloom of cherry trees; in the gardens full of roses, from which some hoary castle keep will suddenly arise and peer at you; and above all, in the ceaseless activity of the folk which people this land of memories. Nothing here that is not used, as though their very love of country—for this single part of France untouched by an invader's hand—has filled them with desire to possess its every inch, and leave no stone unturned. That ancient ruined tower, for instance. You took it for a colony of owls and other ugly night-birds? You were wrong. At the sound of your horse's hoofs, out from the ivy peeps the merry face of a little maid, with hair all whitened with the high road's dust; and as you wander through the sloping vineyards, a little trail of smoke soon warns you of the cottage tucked away beneath your feet. Good peasant stock, these Tourangeaux, worthy to be the chosen people

of Saint Louis, with characters as simple as the days they spend, and strong as the soil from which they wrest their life ; no stolid Northern impassivity ; no treacherous animation of the South ; but frank and honest faces, framed in long chestnut locks, for all the world like statues of their famous kings of old ; their language purest French, spoken neither quick nor slow, without a trace of accent ; for not only is this land the cradle of their royal line of monarchs, it is the birth-place also of their mother-tongue.

But should your mood grow weary of this teeming life, and need a mood more sombre and remote, you need only cross to the other bank of the river. There you will behold blue domes and tiny cupolas all floating in a haze, like any fairy city of the East ; there is the distant town of Chambord, and farther on is Chanteloup, with its graceful pagoda, suspended in mid-air ; while, not far from both these palaces, stands a plainer building far, commanding attention by its solid outline and the grandeur of the site on which it stands. For this, the Castle of Chaumont, is built to command the highest point on the river, with lofty walls and enormous towers encircling the hill beneath. Its long, slate-covered steeples pierce the sky, and give the whole building that monastic and religious look so characteristic of the châteaux of this part of France. It is surrounded on all sides by great dark and tufted trees, reminiscent from a distance of the plumes worn by King Henry in his royal hat ; while at its feet, by the river side, nestles the village, joined to the castle by a narrow, rock-hewn path. Mid-way between the two lies the tiny chapel ; here the nobles descend to say their prayers, while the villagers must climb to this little neutral world, alike for rich and poor, in which misery meets splendour, and the squabbles of which they are the cause must hold their peace awhile.

One fair June morning, in the year 1639, the family had been summoned to dinner, according to custom, by the castle bell, and yet it was plain for all to see that

things were not as usual. Whispers were already rife among the servants, murmuring how at prayers that morning Madame la Maréchale was seen with tears in her eyes, as well as in her voice, and had appeared in mourning deeper even than her wont. The whole household—including the Italian servants of the Duchess of Mantua, just then residing at Chaumont—were astonished to see sudden preparations being made for a journey. The old body servant of the late Maréchal d'Effiat was booted and spurred in a way he had forsworn for the rest of his existence. This incomparable old fellow, Grandchamp by name, had followed the head of the house through all his battles, whether with men or with money, acting in the first place as his squire, and in the second as secretary ; only recently he had returned from Germany, bringing details for the mother and children of the death of the Maréchal, whose last breath he had received at Luzzelstein. Indeed, he was one of those faithful retainers, not so easily found in these days, who share their families' fortunes whether for evil or good ; whose heart's desire is achieved when the master marries to produce an heir—a young master, to be moulded and scolded on the same lines as the last ; and who, should revolutions come, will work without a wage and die for those they serve ; struggling in the meantime for their support till happier days, when they may return and cry : “ Back again to *our* estates.” Grandchamp's face in itself was remarkable, with his bronzed skin, and hair of silver-grey, with here and there a strand as black as his thick eye-brows, though the harshness of his features and the roughness of his voice were somewhat belied by the expression of his face. On this particular day he was much engrossed in hurrying up the preparations, and chivvying the servants, all of whom, himself included, were dressed in black.

“ Quickly, lads now, quickly, make haste and bring the dinner in,” he called to them, “ and you, Germain and Etienne, see to the saddling of the horses ; young Master Henri and I have got to be far away from here by

eight o'clock this evening. Look alive, you Italians there ! Have you been sent to fetch your young mistress in to dinner yet ? There she sits, I warrant you, down by the lake in the park, reading her book. Her fine ladyship will never make her appearance till after the first course, and expects everyone to rise when she does come in."

"Grandchamp," said a young woman's voice in his ear, "don't talk like that about the Duchess—not to-day. She is very unhappy, and I think she will stay in her own room. Sancta Maria, poor Grandchamp ! How I do pity you, starting off on a journey as you are, the thirteenth of the month, and the feast-day of Saint Gervais and St. Protais, martyrs both ! I've been all the morning saying my beads for M. de Cinq-Mars, and all the time I couldn't keep myself from thinking of what I've just been saying to you. I know my mistress thinks of it too, for all she's such a grand lady ! It's all very fine to pretend to laugh like that"

The Italian girl suddenly darted off like a bird down a passage, afraid that the big double-doors of the dining-room were about to open. Grandchamp seemed hardly to notice what she had been saying ; he was too occupied, as *maitre d'hotel*, with superintending the servants, sternly motioning them to their places, and himself taking up his position behind the chair of the son and heir. The various members of the household made their way into the room according to precedence—eleven, all told, men and women—and seated themselves at table. Last of all came the Maréchale, on the arm of a handsome old man in magnificent clothes, whom she placed on her left, taking her own place in a large gilded chair in the centre. On her right stood another chair, rather less elaborate, but this remained empty. It fell to the young Marquis d'Effiat, seated opposite to his mother, to help with the honours of the house, but he was not more than twenty, and there was nothing particularly remarkable about him : a certain amount of distinction and gravity of manner, suitable to his position, but little else besides. His young sister of fourteen, two local gentlemen, three

Italian noblemen from the suite of Marie de Gonzague (Duchess of Mantua), a waiting-woman, the daughter's governess, and a neighbouring abbé, old and apparently deaf, completed the party. The chair to the left of the young heir was not yet filled.

The Maréchale was a striking figure of a woman, with large blue eyes of considerable beauty. She was not yet old—being barely forty-five—but grief had done its work, and she both walked and talked slowly and with difficulty, with a habit of closing her eyes and drooping her head for a moment, after the effort of conversation. Her hand was constantly held to her heart, as though in pain, as indeed she was. To her great satisfaction, the guest on her left completely monopolised the conversation, and continued to lead it for the rest of the meal. This was the old Maréchal de Bassompierre, who, for all his white hairs, still preserved an appearance and air of youth quite remarkable to behold; his polished manners and phrases of gallantry had the same rather antiquated air as the dress he wore, and both smacked of the reign of Henry IV—a subject of much amused satisfaction to the present-day courtiers, for from time immemorial the sons have made merry at the expense of their fathers, and it is only among the races of the East that this particular form of ridicule is unknown.

One of the Italian gentlemen had barely questioned the Maréchal as to what he thought of the manner in which the Cardinal was treating the daughter of the Duke of Mantua, when the latter burst forth in his familiar way :

“*Corbleu*, monsieur ! And to whom do you think you are speaking ? Do you expect me to follow the new-fangled notions of to-day ? We old men do not understand the language of modern Courts, any more than they can comprehend ours. Or rather, there is no language spoken in these miserable days, when all the world keeps silence in presence of the Cardinal : an arrogant little upstart who regards us all as so many family portraits, whose heads he is occasionally pleased

to remove from their shoulders. All the same we know good talk when we hear it, do we not, old friend ? ”

And he turned to Puy-Laurens, his old comrade of the same age, but graver and more discreet, who replied in vague phrases, endeavouring to convey to him the tender ground on which he was treading, in speaking thus of the friend of the Maréchale's late husband ; but he might have spared himself the trouble, for the Maréchal interpreted his friend's gestures by way of approbation, and having emptied at one draught an enormous bumper of wine (a remedy often appearing in his memoirs as unfailing against the plague), he leaned back in his chair, waiting for his squire to hand him a further supply, while he established himself more firmly than ever in his seat and his favourite ideas.

“ Yes, there's no doubt of it, we're not wanted here any more. I was only saying so the other day to the poor Duke of Guise, who is now a ruined man. They would shake the sands in the hour glass if they could, to hasten our departure. Monsieur le Cardinal Duke has only to catch sight of three or four of us old stalwarts together in a corner to smell a conspiracy. He knows we are unshakable, and he fears us all the more for not being afraid. Indeed, I understand there is a plot afoot at this very moment to put me in the Bastille ! ”

“ Oh, but Monsieur le Maréchal, where will you take refuge ? ” asked the Italian. “ I can think of no country but Flanders that might be safe for you.”

“ Ah ! My dear sir, you don't know me. It's not a question of taking refuge. I went and saw the King himself before his departure, and told him they had no need to waste time in looking for me, for I would go of my own accord, wherever they chose to take me. And, just as I expected, he replied : ‘ My good old friend, did you really think me capable of any such intention ? Have you never heard of my devotion to your person ? ’ ”

“ Ah, my dear Maréchal, I must congratulate you,” said Madame d'Effiat in her soft voice. “ There speaks the real voice of a monarch who does not forget his

father's friends, and from what I have heard, his actions have been gracious towards you and all your family." She spoke these words insinuatingly, hoping to draw him out from his brooding frame of mind.

"Believe me, madame," replied he, "there is no man better able to appreciate his King than François de Bassompierre; my life was devoted to his father, and what is left of it shall go to the son, nor will it be my fault if any member of my family ever lacks loyalty. My brother's death in the service of Spain has been my greatest grief, and I have just written threatening to disinherit my nephew if rumour speaks true and he should go over to the Emperor's cause."

A guest, hitherto mute, and chiefly remarkable for the profusion of ribbons and shoulder knots that adorned his person, was now pleased to bow, as who should say that these were the sentiments befitting every loyal subject of His Majesty.

"*Pardieu*, Monsieur de Launay, you are quite wrong," retorted the Maréchal, his family pride now thoroughly aroused, "the whole affair is a matter of blood and birth. "Our own people belong to us, just as we belong to Our Lord the King, and both by the grace of God, Who has pleased to call us to our different stations. In the old days one could not walk abroad without one's retinue of squires and pages. Now I notice things are changing—and especially at Court. But here comes a young gentleman in the nick of time to profit by my words."

The door had opened to admit Henri d'Effiat, a youth by no means unprepossessing, with his pale complexion, brown locks, dark eyes and melancholy abstracted air. He was clad entirely in black, except for his deep lace collar; he wore high riding boots, deeply turned back at the knee, and from the distance could be heard the jingling of his spurs upon the stone paving of the floor. Walking straight up to the Maréchale, his mother, he bowed and kissed her hand.

"Well, Henri," she asked him, "are the horses all ready? What time are you taking your departure?"

"Directly after dinner, madame, with your permission," replied her son, for those were the days of ceremony, and passing behind her chair he bowed formally to M. de Bassompierre, before seating himself on his brother's left.

"Well, well, my boy," said the old man, still continuing to enjoy his meal, "and so you're off to seek your fortune in that slippery world, the Court! I'm sorry for your sake that it isn't what it used to be. Once it was the King's drawing-room, where he received his real friends, gathered around him out of sheer devotion and comradeship, spending their money with him, sharing his games and amusements, with little in return but permission to have their vassal's heads broken in the royal service. The honours of a man of quality in those days were paid for out of his own purse: I sold a property for every promotion I received; my generalship in the Swiss Guards cost me 400,000 crowns, and the christening of the present King brought my tailor's bill up to 100,000 francs.

"Ah, but confess," said the mistress of the house, smiling at him, "that it was nobody's fault but yours; we have all heard of the wonderful pearl-embroidered costume that you used to wear; all the same, I should be sorry to see the fashions of those times revive."

"Rest assured, madame, that that will never be. The days of magnificence are over and done with; they may have been foolish, but at least they proved our independence. And it helped to check ambition too. Only the rich could cut a figure then, and gold is never found except in gold mines. Our fine old houses knew this before they met with their disasters. What should they want with ambition? They held their positions at Court through merit of their own, and none knew it better than the King."

"But, monsieur," came a polite interruption from M. de Launay, "surely this independence has been the father of countless wars and rumours of wars? M. de Montmorency, for instance." If the speaker had meant

to sting the old man into a fury he could not have chosen his words with greater care.

The Maréchal leapt out of his chair. "*Corbleu*, monsieur ! I'll not sit by and hear such things spoken ! These wars, as you are pleased to call them, monsieur, can alter the principle of the State by not one jot or tittle. They have no more power than a duel to destroy the throne. Do you think there is one of these party chiefs who would not have laid his victory at the feet of his monarch if he had won it ? It was Faction and not Monarchy they were fighting. And what have you achieved in destroying us ? You have broken the bulwarks of the throne and put nothing in its place. I have no doubt whatever but that the Cardinal Duke will accomplish his design, and the nobles, in losing their estates, will lose their power too. A new nobility will arise, based on nothing but Court favours. And what of their influence on the people ? When the people revolt. . . ."

The Marquise thought fit to interrupt him. "My dear Maréchal, you are in a dreadful mood to-day ! Let us hope that neither I nor my children will ever see those frightful times. I have never seen you carried away by politics in this way before. I was hoping you were going to give some good advice to my son. Come, Henri, what's the matter ? What is in your mind ?"

Ginq Mars was gazing sadly in front of him, at the glorious view that could be seen through the large window. The sun was at the height of its splendour, colouring the sand of the river banks, and painting the trees and lawns with touches of emerald and of gold ; the sky was an azure blue, the waves of the river a luminous yellow, broken by little green jewels in the form of islands, while threading their way between them could be seen the sails of the trading boats like a fleet in amush.

"Beautiful nature," thought the boy, as he looked at it all ; "soon my heart will not be simple enough any more to enjoy your magic ; passion has already scorched

it with her wings, and the strange doings of men have entered in and disturbed it : it is a labyrinth I am forced to tread, where maybe I shall lose myself, while Marie. . .”

But at the words of his mother, he roused himself, afraid of showing any “childish” regrets at leaving home.

“I was thinking, madame, of the best route to follow to Perpignan—and also of the road that would one day bring me back again to you.”

“Do not forget to go by way of Poitiers, and to stop at Loudon to see the Abbé Quillet, your old tutor ; he will tell you useful things about the Court, for he stands well with the Duc d’Bouillon ; and, in any case, it is a mark of respect that you owe to him.”

“Oho, then you are bound for the siege of Perpignan’ ” queried the Maréchal, thinking it was high time to put in a word again. “Faith but I envy you, One’s first siege ! I would give much to have mine all over again in company with the good King. I only hope His Majesty will receive you as well as his father did me. He is a brave man and a good one, but this cursed Spanish etiquette has crept into his Court, and the good old days of comradeship have gone for ever. He surrounds himself by an atmosphere of ice, and I, for one, have waited in vain for it to thaw. Good King Henry’s ways were not like that, and we at least were free to tell how much we loved him.”

Cinq Mars, as if forcing himself to pay attention to the old man’s words, began questioning him as to the late King’s manner of speech.

“As quick as it was frank,” replied the other. “Soon after my arrival in France, I was playing at cards with him and the Duchess of Beaufort at Fontainebleau, and he asked me what had brought me to his country. ‘*Ma foi*, Sire,’ I declared to him, ‘I did not come here to enter into your service, but to pass some pleasant months at your Court and, go from thence to Spain ; but Your Majesty’s presence has charmed me so that I wish to

go no further, and with your permission would serve you to the end of my days.' Whereupon he embraced me and assured me I should never have a better master, nor one who would love me more deeply, as, alas ! I have since lived to prove ! For I have sacrificed all in his service, including the woman I loved. A high price, but I would pay it still—even with Mademoiselle de Montmorency."

The old man's eyes were moist, but the young folk could hardly suppress a smile at the thought of the Princess de Condé, hardly regarded in these days as a youthful beauty. Cinq Mars himself laughed bitterly as he thought : " Is love, too, then, subject to the laws of fashion, a prey to ridicule, like any out-worn frock ? Happy the man who does not outlive his youth and illusions, but carries his treasure with him to the grave." Then, with an effort, he pulled himself together, anxious that the old man's feelings should not be wounded, and said :

" Tell me, monsieur, were you always permitted such freedom of speech at the Court of his late Majesty ? I should have supposed he found it necessary to adopt a note of frankness in his early days, but later, as supreme monarch, did his attitude not change ? "

" Never ! Never in all his life ! Our great King was a man from first to last, and knew how to deal with other men. Never shall I forget seeing him embrace the Duc de Guise, the very day he died. He had just been making a witty remark to me, whereon the Duke turned to him and said : ' As I live, Sire, you are one of the most entertaining men on earth, and surely the gods were determined from the first to bring us two together, for had you been of low degree, nothing would have prevented me from taking you into my service ; but as God has willed you to be a mighty King, there was nothing for it but for me to enter yours ! ' Greatest of men ! You did well to say to us : ' When you no longer have me with you, you will know what you have lost ! ' " The old Maréchal was on the verge of

tears. His repeated bumpers of wine were beginning to tell on him.

During the old man's outburst the various other guests had been amusing themselves in divers ways. One of the Italians chatted in what he believed was a confidential manner with the young daughter of the house ; the other turned his attention to the deaf old Abbé, who, with his hand held up to his ear, was the only member of the party who seemed to give serious attention to anything at all. Cinq-Mars was again plunged in reverie ; his brother did the honours of the table with all his accustomed dignity. Puy-Laurens was carefully observing his hostess ; he had committed himself to the Orleans party, and went in terror of the Cardinal ; as for the lady herself, she seemed worried and far from happy ; thoughtless words had kept reminding her either of her dead husband, or the imminent departure of her son ; above all, she was fearful lest the Maréchal should compromise himself irretrievably in the presence of M. de Launay, whom she scarcely knew and whose politics she suspected. Once or twice she had tried to warn her old friend, but her efforts were fruitless and had only had the effect of making him address all his remarks to that very quarter, with an air of superb disdain. De Launay himself had adopted an air of indifference and frigid politeness, which lasted till the moment when the double-doors were opened to announce the arrival of Madame the Duchess of Mantua.

The events we have just been describing at length had occupied but a short space of time, and dinner was only half-way through when the entrance of Maria de Gonzague brought all the guests on to their feet. She was small, but beautifully proportioned, with a fair skin and flower-like freshness contrasting finely with the blackness of her hair and eyes. The Maréchale half rose from her seat to greet this youthful and pretty guest of hers, and kissed her on the brow.

"We have been expecting you for such a long time, dearest Marie," was all she said, "and now you have

come to fill the vacant place of my child who is leaving me."

The youthful Duchess cast down her eyes and tried to conceal her blushes as she replied, "You may well say that, madame, who have yourself been such a perfect mother to me."

And, the other side of the table, Cinq-Mars was trembling at the look on her face.

This latest arrival served to alter somewhat the tone of the conversation, which ceased to be general, each of the guests confining himself to his neighbour. The old Maréchal alone still continued to murmur his opinions of the magnificence of the old Court and the avarice of the new; of wars in Turkey, and tournaments in France; but to his infinite regret nobody took up the conversation, and as the clock struck two, five horses made their appearance in the courtyard, four of which were ridden by household servants, well booted and spurred; the fifth, a black and frisky beast, was led by old Grandchamp for his young master to mount.

"Here we are!" cried Bassompierre. "Here comes the gallant war-horse all saddled and bridled, and our young gentleman must take a leaf out of Marot's book and sing:

' Farewell to lovely woman,
And all her lovely ways . . . '"

And the old man sang through the verses with great gusto, to the infinite amusement of the whole table, with the exception of three people. "Dear God, to have his seventeen summers once again," he continued. "You must leave his chair vacant, madame, and he will soon be returning to it, covered with fame and glory."

The Maréchale suddenly became as white as a ghost, rose from the table, and burst into tears; all the guests rose with her, but she had scarcely taken more than two steps when she stumbled into the nearest chair. Her sons, her daughter and the young Duchess gathered

around her with much concern while she struggled to speak through her sobs.

"Forgive me, dear friends . . . I am foolish and childish I know, but I am too weak at the moment to be mistress of myself. We have been sitting down thirteen to table, and you, my dearest Marie, were the cause of it. But I must not break down like this before my children. Good-bye, my son—give me one kiss, and may God have you in His keeping. May you always be worthy of your name and of your father."

And then, as Homer tells us, "Laughing through her tears," she rose exclaiming, "Now let me see my young squire get to horse!"

The young traveller kissed his mother's hands and made her a low bow; then, bowing to the Duchess, without raising his eyes, he kissed his brother and sister, and shook the Maréchal by the hand. A few moments afterwards he had mounted his horse and was off, everyone crowding around the windows to watch his departure—except Madame d'Effiat, who sat alone in her suffering.

The Maréchal laughed. "He goes off at a gallop. It is a good sign," said he.

"Ah, dear God!" cried the young Princess, drawing back from the window.

"What has happened?" cried the mother.

"Nothing—nothing at all," said M. de Launay. "Your son's horse stumbled a little as it went through the gateway, but he pulled it up almost at once. See, he is waving to us from the road."

"Another bad omen," murmured the Marquise, as she withdrew to her own apartments.

All the guests followed her example, and were either silent, or spoke in subdued voices. The rest of the day passed sadly at Chaumont, and supper was a gloomy affair.

Ten o'clock struck when the old Maréchal, conducted by his servant, retired to his chamber in the northern tower, close to the main entrance, and opposite the river. The heat was excessive; he opened the window, and

wrapping himself in a long silk robe, he placed his heavy, torch down on the table and desired to be left alone. His window overlooked the rolling plain, dimly lit by an uncertain moon; thick clouds were piled up in the sky, and the whole atmosphere was one of melancholy. Bassompierre, though little addicted to dreaming, found himself ruminating on the turn of the conversation at dinner-time, and from thence passed to dreaming of his previous life at the old Court, and its contrast to the new reign, that somehow had seemed to cast a blight upon his life, for all things lately had gone wrong with him. First, the death of a favourite sister, then the failure of his fortunes, and finally his estates; last, but not least, he had lost his old friend, the Maréchal d'Effiat, whose room he was now occupying. He sighed deeply, as a result of all these reflections, and drew near to the open window to breathe in the fresh air.

At that moment he thought he heard the sound of horses' hoofs down by the side of the wood, but it died away on a puff of wind, and he dismissed it from his mind. One by one, he watched the lights being extinguished in the court-yard and stables; then, sinking into his large tapestry arm-chair, he rested his elbow on the table and abandoned himself to dreaming, pulling out from his bosom a small medallion, worn on a ribbon, and addressing tender words to it: "Come, my old and honoured master, come," murmured the old man. "Talk to me as you used to do. Let the King be forgotten in the smile of a friend in need of advice; let us laugh together over love, and war, and women, and glory. Why could I not have died in your place? Why need it be that your blood must flow instead of mine?"

The medal he held in his hand was dimmed with tears, which in their turn were wiped away by kisses. Suddenly the door was opened violently.

"Who goes there?" cried out the Maréchal. And his sword leapt from its scabbard.

His surprise was by no means diminished by the appearance of M. de Launay, hat in hand, who advanced

with the utmost embarrassment with the words : " Monsieur le Maréchal, it is with extreme regret I have to inform you that His Majesty has ordered your arrest. A coach is waiting at the gate for you, attended by thirty musketeers of His Eminence the Cardinal Duke."

Bassompierre was still seated, one hand holding the medallion, the other clutching the hilt of his sword, which he now handed to his captor with the scornful words :

" I realise, monsieur, that I have already lived too long. That very thought was in my mind when you came in, and it is in the name of the great Henry that I hand over my sword to his son without a struggle. Follow me."

De Launay bowed his head, impressed, in spite of himself, by this dignified old figure who, grasping his torch, preceded him into the court-yard, the doors of which were all guarded by mounted soldiers, to the consternation of the entire household. The coach moved off rapidly, followed by its escort. The Maréchal, seated by de Launay's side, was beginning to doze off to the rhythmic sound of the wheels, when a loud voice was heard crying to the driver, " Halt there ! " As this produced no effect, it was followed up by a pistol shot. The horses stopped dead.

" I declare to you, monsieur, this is nothing whatever to do with me," remarked Bassompierre. Then putting his head out of the window, he found himself to be in the heart of a little wood, in a pathway so narrow that the musketeers on either side were unable to pass the carriage, to the great advantage of the aggressors, the chief of whom now rode up to the door of the coach, parrying the blows of the Guards with his long sword, and crying at the top of his voice :

" To me, M. le Maréchal, to me ! "

" Why Henri, is it you, silly boy ? Leave him alone, gentlemen—please leave him alone. He is nothing but a child ! " The musketeers lowered their weapons, and the two looked at one another before the Maréchal continued :

"And what in the devil's name are you doing here when you ought to be at Tours by this time, or even further, if you had not played this fool's trick of turning back?"

"It was not exactly on your account that I returned. It was for private reasons," replied the other confidentially. "But as I feel quite sure they are taking you off to the Bastille, that tomb of eternal secrets, I know mine will be safe. Nevertheless, if you had allowed me," he continued, raising his voice, "I could have helped you to escape from this wood. It is the very place for a fight. A peasant told me of this insult they have offered—to us, even more than to you—in removing you like this from the shelter of our house."

"It is by the King's order, my boy, and his will must be obeyed—by me as well as by you. All the same I thank you from the bottom of my heart. And now be off once more on your journey."

"Allow me to inform you, M. de Cinq-Mars," said de Launay, "that His Majesty expressly wished me to explain to the Maréchal that however much it grieves him to do this, it is from fear of worse harm happening to him that he begs him to spend the next few days in the retirement of the Bastille."

"You see, my boy," cried Bassompierre, with a merry laugh, "how easily these things can happen. You had best learn to take care of yourself!"

"Very good," replied Henri, "as you wish. I'll play knight errant no more for others who do not wish to help themselves." And plunging again into the wood, while the carriage started off at a sharp trot, he chose a roundabout path that brought him back once more to the château.

At the foot of the western tower he stopped. He had ridden well ahead of Grandchamp and his little escort, and now, without dismounting, he manœuvred his horse against the wall, to enable him to tap on the shutter of the window just above him.

It was past mid-night, and the moon had disappeared.

The dark mass of the roofs and towers was faintly defined against a sky almost as dark ; not a single light shone in the building. Sleep reigned everywhere, and Cinq-Mars, concealed under his broad-brimmed hat and large cloak, waited, waited—for what ?

A voice was heard behind the window-frame.

“ Is it you, Monsieur de Cinq-Mars ? ”

“ Alas ! Who else ? Who but Cinq-Mars would return like a thief in the night to the house of his fathers, without even taking farewell of his mother once again ? Who else would come to dwell on the sadness of the present moment instead of what the future holds for him ? ”

The voice replied again, this time not without tears :

“ Henri, Henri, what is your grief ? Have I not done all in my power for you, and more ? Is it my fault that Fate has destined me to be the daughter of a prince ? Can we choose our cradles at will ? If so, then mine had been a shepherd girl's. Pity the child of royal blood, whose life is not her own and who may never learn to weep. Since I have known you, have I not tried to snatch at happiness and escape from crowns ? For two years now I have been fighting the evil fate that divides me from you. You know—none better—how I shunned my duty for your sake, even thanking the unhappy day that saw my father's downfall. Why—I have even longed and prayed for revolutions, hoping and believing that my people might think of me as dead. But now these dreams are over. I am sent for by the Queen, Henri. We have slept too long. We must awake and be brave. Think no more of our two beautiful years here together. Forget everything but one word alone. Ambition, ambition, and again ambition—for my sake ! ”

“ Do you really want me to forget it all ? ” Cinq Mars' voice was very soft.

She hesitated. “ Yes. At least—all of it that I have forgotten.” And then, a moment later she continued more briskly

"You must forget our days of peace and happiness, our long sweet walks together in the woods, and think only of the future. Go now. Your father was a Marshall, and you must be yet more—Constable, or even prince. Follow your fortune. You are young, noble, brave—and there is one who loves you."

"For always?" asked Henri.

"For ever and for ever."

Cinq-Mars seized her hand, and cried out with all the ardour that was in him:

"I swear to you, Marie, by the Virgin whose name you bear, either I will win you for myself, or my head shall fall in the attempt!"

"Oh, Henri. How can you say such a dreadful thing!" exclaimed the girl, and a small white hand appeared through the window to clasp his. "Your life shall be straight and true, my knight, in the service of the King, your master, whom you must love above all else—unless it be she who waits and suffers for your sake. Take this little golden crucifix and wear it on your heart. Many a bitter tear has it received from me, but none so bitter as those your true love would shed should you ever do your Sovereign injury. Give me that ring I see gleaming on your finger. Dear God! It is all wet with blood, and so is mine!"

"What matter? But it was not for you I shed it. Did you hear no sound a little while ago?"

"No. But hark! There is something now!"

"No, Marie. Only an owl hooting in one of the towers."

"I thought I heard our two names spoken together, Henri! How did you get these bloodstains? Tell me quickly—and then go."

"Yes, I am going. Here comes a cloud to blot you from my sight. Farewell, angel of all my dreams. My love for you has sown the seeds of my ambition. For the first time in my life I feel it burn within my soul. And its ennobling power shall bring my destiny to pass—and yours. From now onwards, ever united!"

"Till death," cried the girl.

"Death!" exclaimed Cinq-Mars. "Absence is what I fear!"

The voice grew fainter from above. "Good-bye . . . good-bye . . . I am afraid!" Slowly the window closed down upon those two clasped hands.

But the black horse was livelier than ever, and carried his master off at a gallop which scarcely slowed down till their arrival at Tours, the city of ancient spires.

Old Grandchamp, who had been awaiting his master all this time, grumbled more than ever when he found there was to be no going to bed that night. The little party rode straight through the town, and five days later, without any further adventures, they entered the old city of Loudon in Poitou.

CHAPTER II

THE PROCESSION

THE reign in which our story is set has little claim to distinction in the best sense of the word. Rather it must be regarded in the light of an eclipse between two radiant suns—Henry the Fourth and the Great Louis. It was a tarnished age, spotted with evil from many sources—and more particularly the Church. The clergy of that day—we must sadly admit it—had little to distinguish them from the rest of a complex nation, having its own nobility as well as common herd; its ignorant and criminal classes as well as its wise men and virtuous prelates. The French clergy had yet to undergo their refining process during the long reign of Louis XIV., and its endurance had yet to be tested by the blood offered up on the altars of the revolution in 1793. Having achieved its destiny through the means of monarch and republic—a little softened by one and greatly chastened by the other—we find the clergy of to-day, a type of much austerity and little vice.

We have thought it well to offer these reflections before relating those historical events which form the subject of our story, and to avoid all unnecessary blemishes so far as in us lies, treating those dark spots that cannot be glozed over as the wild oats of a life that has found itself through suffering, and shedding here and there a tender tear over the passionate follies of a man now wise through years.

When the little cavalcade rode through the narrow streets of Loudon, they found them filled with excited and noisy crowds; the church bells rang as though the city were afire, and all the world, oblivious of the newcomers, was hastening in the same direction. The expressions on the faces of the crowd were strangely varied. They gathered into countless little knots, whispering and talking, and suddenly all sounds would cease, except some earnest voice of exhortation, itself soon drowned by the furious cries and exclamations of its listeners. As the crowd scattered, the preacher was revealed in the robes of a Capucin friar, with a wooden crucifix in hand, pointing to the large building next the church, towards which his listeners were hurrying.

"Holy Jesus!" exclaimed an old dame. "Who would ever have thought that the Evil One would chose a good city like ours for his abode?"

"And that our good Ursuline nuns should have been the very ones to harbour him?" said another.

"They do say," chattered a third, "that the devil who has entered into our poor Mother Abbess is named Legion!"

"What was that you said, my daughter?" a neighbouring nun enquired. "Did you not know then that seven evil spirits have made their home in her poor body? So beautiful as it was—no doubt that was the reason why; but now it is delivered up to hell. The Holy Prior of Carmes, yesterday, during his exhortation, has cast the demon Eazas straight from her mouth, and the Holy Father Lactance has relieved her from the evil spirit Beherit. But five are left within her still, who

will not take their leave, and when the holy exorcists—whom God preserve—did conjure them in Latin, they answered that they would not go before their power was proved. And while the heretics and Huguenots stood by and doubted, the most wicked demon of them all, whose name was Elimi, gave out that this very day he would cause the cap of M. de Laubardemont to rise from his head and remain suspended in the air for the time it takes to say a *Miserere*."

"Holy Virgin!" replied the first old woman. "It makes me tremble all over to hear of it. And when I think of all the times this wicked sorcerer Urbain has served the Mass to me."

"And I," said a young girl, making the sign of the cross, "have been confessed by him these ten months past, and the Evil One would surely have crept into my soul had I not always worn my holy relic of St. Genevieve."

"You may well say that, Martine," chuckled a fat old market-woman, "for you always took your time in there—you and your handsome sorcerer man."

The young girl turned crimson and mingled with the throng that was gathered around the closed door, waiting to be the first to enter. They chattered volubly, stimulated by a pleasant simmering of apprehension, of something new to see, be it an evil spirit, or some new form of torment known to man.

"Aunt! aunt! tell me," said the girl Martine to the oldest of the party, "is it true that you have really heard demons speak?"

"As true as I see you here, my dear niece, and there are those near by that know it too. And that is why," she continued, "I made you come with me here to-day for the good of your soul, that you may see for yourself the powers of evil."

"And what sort of a voice has an evil spirit, dear aunt?" said the girl again, snatching at the opportunity to turn the conversation away from herself.

"Why, the very same voice as our Lady Superior,

to whom may Our Lady be merciful. The poor young thing! I was there yesterday, and pitiful it was to see her—how when the Holy Father Lactance had pronounced the name of Urbain Grandier, the froth foamed at her mouth, and she spoke Latin as if she were reading the Bible. I didn't understand very well all she said, but I can tell you that rose-coloured flames came out of her ears and the back of her neck, and the air smelt so strongly of sulphur that the lieutenant called out to us that we should close up our noses and eyes, for the demons were about to come forth!"

"Hear the old fools! They verily believe they are about to witness a Witches' Sabbath, broomsticks and all," mocked a young soldier who stood near.

"Young man, young man," a sober citizen exhorted him, "speak not so lightly of things that are hidden from human sight, or you may be consumed before you are aware."

"To hell with the exorcists and all their nonsense, say I," replied the son of Mars. My name is Grand Ferre—and it wasn't given to me for nothing!" And, clutching the hilt of his sword with one hand, he twirled his blonde moustaches fiercely with the other, regarding the spectators with the best frown he could summon, but as no-one in the crowd appeared to have either the desire or the courage to meet his gaze, he strolled slowly away, left foot foremost, meandering around the dark and narrow streets with the soldier's universal contempt for every creature that does not wear a uniform.

Nevertheless, a small group of sober-minded citizens were threading their way through the excitable crowd, somewhat stupefied, apparently, by the noise and foolish babble, and looking silently on at each new demonstration of senseless folly. And this was not without its effect upon the peasants and country folk, who had come to town to see what they could see, and who, being in the habit of forming all their opinions on those of the landed proprietors, felt that something was about to happen that boded them no good, and immediately

resorted to the one and only weapon of the ignorant and down-trodden—resignation and passive stoicism.

One of the eldest of them now advanced, followed by ten or twelve young peasants, his sons and nephews, each one wearing the large hat and blue blouse that the children of Gaul have elected to work in this many a day—so well adapted is it, both in past and present ages, to hard labour in a damp climate. He advanced towards this little group of citizens, taking off his hat—the rest of his family following suit—and revealing his weather-beaten wrinkled face, crowned with long white hair. His shoulders were bent with age and labour. A member of the sombre group held out his hand and spoke to him in a friendly manner, not without respect.

“Well, Father Leroux,” said he, “and so you too have left your farm to come into the town without waiting for market day? Strange happening, is it not? As though your good oxen should start unharnessing themselves and go ahunting after hares? Where would the farm be then?”

“Ah, Monsieur le Comte,” replied the peasant, “strange happenings, indeed. So strange that we have come to learn what we may learn.”

“You have come to the right place, then,” replied the Count, “for here is Lawyer Fournier, who will tell you the whole truth, seeing it was only yesterday he lost his position as Crown Prosecutor, and from henceforth his eloquence will know no master save himself. Maybe you will hear him speak before the day is over, but much as I wish it, for the accused man’s sake, I fear it will bode but little good to the advocate himself.”

“Never fear that, monsieur. What care I but for the truth?” replied Fournier. The speaker was a pale young man, but with an expression on his face that can only be described as “nobleness”: his fair hair, his vivid light-blue eyes, and his tall and slender figure all made him seem younger than he really was, but it was easy to read into his features that “spiritual precocity” resulting only from study and natural ability

His dress and his short cloak of the period, were both of black, and under his left arm he carried a roll of papers, which he would seize in his right hand and shake as he spoke, like a warrior grasping the pommel of his sword. You almost expected to see him shake the lightning out of them on the heads of the men who had aroused his wrath, namely, three Capucin monks and a friar who were threading their way through the crowd.

"Father William," continued M. de Lude, "how is it you have only brought the male members of your family here with you to-day?"

"Faith, monsieur, partly because I have no wish that my daughters should learn to dance like these nuns are doing, and partly because boys know better how to fend for themselves if it comes to a fight."

"It will not 'come to a fight,' my good man, believe me, answered the Count. Stand in your places now to see the procession which is about to begin, and don't forget that you have reached the ripe age of seventy years."

"Ugh! ugh!" murmured the old man, ranging his offspring around him, as though they were soldiers, "I have been to the wars with the good King Henry, and know how to fire a pistol with the best of them." And he seated himself on a low post, his knotted cudgel between his knees, his white-bearded chin resting on his two clasped hands. There he remained, with eyes half closed, apparently immersed in the memories of his youth.

Sitting there in his striped dress of the days of Henry IV, it was curious to see his actual resemblance to that monarch in the latter part of his life, though the assassin's knife had taken care that the King should never grow white-headed like this humble son of toil. But a sudden clashing of bells now drew everyone's attention towards the end of the main street of Loudon.

A long procession now came into view, its pikes and banners towering over the heads of the populace, who silently regarded this curious apparition in their midst, half sinister and half ridiculous.

First walked the archers, with their pointed beards and large plumed hats, hedging around, with their enormous halberds, a double line of gray-clad "penitents"—figures enveloped in sombre robes from head to foot, with slits for eyes and nose—much as may be seen in modern times among funeral mourners in remote villages of the Pyrenees. In their hands they carried enormous waxen candles, and the slowness of their walk and the glitter of their eyes beneath the hoods gave them a strange and forbidding appearance, as of so many gliding ghosts.

The people began to murmur.

"There's many a rascal hidden behind those masks," remarked a citizen.

"With faces even uglier than yours," retorted a young fellow.

"Oh, but they make me afraid," gasped a girl in the crowd.

"The only fear I have is for my purse," said a masculine voice.

"Ah, Jesus! Here come our holy brothers of the Penitence," cried an old dame, removing her black shawl. "Only see the banner they are carrying. Now we shall all be saved; see how the devil stands forth in burning flames, and the monk leading him by a chain round the neck! See—now the judges are coming—ah, the wonderful fine men! How beautiful they are in their red robes! Holy Virgin! They have made a good choice!"

"Those are our priest's personal enemies," whispered the Comte de Lude to Lawyer Fournier, who made a note of it.

"See, see who they are!" went on the old woman, in her excitement nudging and pinching all those who stood nearest to her; "there's our good M. Mignon whispering to the counsellor gentlemen from Poitiers; may God have them in His keeping!"

"That is Roatin, who did his best to ruin him a year ago," M. de Lude's voice could still be heard murmuring

to the young lawyer, who was scribbling under his cloak, concealed from view by the black group of citizens.

" See, see, gather round good people all ! Here comes Monsieur Barré, the curé of St. Jacques ! " cried the aged crone.

" He is a saint," said another voice.

" He is a hypocrite," a man cried out.

" See how thin he is from fasting ! "

" How pale remorse has made him ! "

" He's the one to cast forth devils ! "

" He's the one to drive them out ! "

But now the murmur of the crowd took another form.

" How beautiful she is ! "

The Superior of the Ursuline Convent was walking, followed by all her nuns, with veil drawn up around her face. There was nothing distinctive about her dress unless it were the enormous rosary of black beads, falling almost to her feet, with a golden cross attached, but her pallid face, thrown into relief by the brown encircling hood, could not fail to impress ; her eyes were black and passionate, over-arched by a pair of eyebrows drawn by Nature's hand with as much care as the Circassian woman will take to pluck hers out with pincers, but the slight pucker between them revealed a storm-tossed mind. Nevertheless, her attitude was cool and calm, her walk slow and deliberate ; while in front of her were clasped her exquisite hands, white and motionless as those of marble figures that pray on tombs to all eternity.

" See, aunt, see, there go Sister Agnes and Sister Clare, walking behind her. They are crying," said the young girl Martine.

" That comes of being inhabited by evil spirits, my girl. They are frightened."

" Or repentant maybe," said the same man's voice that had spoken before.

Suddenly a great silence fell upon the crowd as though some spell were cast upon them. For behind the four penitents walked the curé of Sainte-Croix, clad in his

ordinary pastor's frock : a face instinct with nobility, with a sweetness of expression that words cannot convey. He adopted no airs of haughty indifference, but looked to right and left of him, in search of some friendly face to help him on his way. Nor was he disappointed ; he heard their sobs, and saw their arms outstretched towards him—while some of them bore weapons in their hands. But not a sign did they receive from their beloved priest, nor would he even meet their gaze, fearing lest his own misfortune should be the cause of it in others. For that was Urban Grandier.

Suddenly the procession halted, at a sign from the figure in the rear who seemed to be in command. He was tall, lean and colourless, clad in a long black robe with a cap of the same hue—the face of a basilisk with the expression of a Nero. He signed to the guards to surround him, observing with much uneasiness the little black knot of citizens whom we have already mentioned, and the peasants clustered around them. The monks, too, took their stand by him, while, in his rasping voice, he read out this curious pronouncement :

“ We, the undersigned, Sieur de Laubardemont, Procurator General, invested with discretionary powers to conduct the case of Urbain Grandier, and judge him on the counts of accusation, assisted by the Reverend Fathers Mignon and Barré, together with Father Lactance and all the judges here convoked to try him as a sorcerer, do hereby make the following pronouncements: *Primo* that the self-constituted Council of Land Owners and Citizens of the Town is forthwith to be dispersed as tending to sedition : its pronouncements are declared null and void, and its letter to His Majesty the King, directed against us, the judges, intercepted and burned in a public place, as casting foul suspicion on the holy nuns of St. Ursuline and the Reverend Fathers and Learned Judges. *Secundo* it is forbidden to assert in public or in private that the said nuns are not inhabited by evil spirits, and to cast a doubt upon the power of the Exorcist—by penalty of twenty thousand pounds and corporal chastisement.”

“ Approved by the Bailiffs and Sheriffs on this 18th day of June, in the year of grace, 1639.”

He had scarcely finished reading the document when a harsh blare of trumpets burst forth, almost drowning the sound of the last few words, together with the murmurs of the listening crowd. The procession hurriedly resumed its way into the large building near the Church, that had formerly been a convent, but had now fallen into decay, except for the spacious hall, now about to do service as a place of judgment. Laubardemont only felt himself safe when he heard the sound of the big double-doors closing behind him, and shutting out the cries of the populace.

CHAPTER III

THE GOOD PRIEST

AND meanwhile, what had become of our hero, Cinq-Mars? Being a young man gifted with plenty of common-sense, it had not taken him long to realise that this was not the most propitious moment to seek out his old tutor, and he had remained on horseback, together with his followers, in a little side street, from which he could obtain an excellent view of everything that went on. At first the crowd was far too occupied with other matters to pay any attention to him, and it was only when the excitement began to subside that he found himself becoming an object of curiosity. The mob's suspicions were by now thoroughly aroused. Here was another stranger—probably an "exorcist." Some peasants promptly made the discovery that he was blocking up the road with his five horses. He felt that the time had come for action, and quickly ascertaining the most peaceable-looking members of the throng, he advanced, hat in hand, towards the distinguished-looking man in black, saying as he did so :

"Could you inform me, monsieur, as to where I can find the Abbé Quillet?"

If he had pronounced the name of Lucifer himself the

crowd could scarcely have looked more alarmed, though their attitude now became one of respect rather than anger. Moreover, luck seemed to be on his side, for the Comte de Lude made way to his horse's side, and there stood bowing.

"If you will be good enough to dismount, monsieur, I think I can give you the information you want."

After a short whispered conference between the two, and much ceremonious leave-taking, according to the custom of the day, Cinq-Mars mounted his black horse once again, and, together with his servants, made his way through numerous little back streets. As he rode along, his thoughts were full of the old Abbé who had taught him in his childhood; how good it would be to see him again, if only for a moment, and how vividly he recollected his kindly presence, and the sound of his calm, strong voice.

It was with this image in his mind that he arrived at the little dark lane that had been described to him—so narrow that the flaps of his boots at the knees could touch the walls on either side. At the farther end was a small wooden house of one story. He beat on the door impatiently with quick-repeated blows.

"Who goes there?" called out an angry voice. And almost immediately the door opened, revealing a little man, short, stout, and scarlet in the face, with a black skull-cap on his head, a white ruff round his neck, and riding-boots that completely swallowed up his stocky little pair of legs. In his hand he held a couple of horse-pistols.

"I shall sell my life hard," he cried out, "and . . ."

"Gently, Abbé, gently," said his pupil, taking him by the arm. "We are none but friends here."

"My boy, my boy, is it you?" cried the little man, dropping his pistols, that were immediately picked up by a servant, who was also armed to the teeth. "What in Heaven's name has sent you to this ill-fated town? I am only waiting till night time to escape from it myself. But come in, come in quickly. I thought it

was the archers of Laubardemont, and I was prepared to give them a little surprise. See—there are my horses, all ready. I am going to Italy to rejoin our friend, the Duc de Bouillon. Jean, Jean, shut that door quickly behind monsieur's servants, and request them not to make too much noise, although we are far removed from all other houses here."

Grandchamp obeyed the injunctions of this intrepid little priest, who embraced Cinq-Mars repeatedly, standing on tip-toe before he could reach his face. He led him hurriedly into a narrow room, desolate as a deserted barn, and sitting down on a black leather trunk he gave vent to his feelings :

"My dear boy, where on earth are you bound for, and what is your mother thinking of to let you come into this place? Have you not seen the things they are doing to an unfortunate man doomed to destruction? Is that a fit sight to greet my young pupil on his first entry into life? That time of all times when youth first forms his opinions of his fellow creatures, and should encounter nothing but what is good and just. The pity of it! Why did you come?" And he held the boy's hand tight between his own red and roughened ones, as the latter replied :

"But, my dear Abbé, cannot you guess that it is just because you were at Loudon that I have come here? As to the things I have just been seeing, I can assure you they have not made me look upon my fellow men other than the way you taught me to, by your own virtues and excellent instruction. If you think that five or six ridiculous madmen . . . "

"Now, don't waste time in talking. I will explain these 'madmen,' as you call them. But first of all—where are you going and what are you doing?"

"I am on my way to Perpignan, where the Cardinal Duke intends to present me to His Majesty."

This made the old priest leap from the black trunk, and striding, or rather running, from one end of the room to another, he almost wept as he repeated the words:

"The Cardinal! The Cardinal! My child—they will ruin you! Heavens! What devilry are they up to now? Who is going to succour my poor boy in this land of danger?" And he took his hands again between his own, gazing into his pupil's face, and trying to read his thoughts.

"I hardly know," said Cinq-Mars, looking over his head, "but I had imagined it would be the Cardinal Richelieu, who was my father's friend."

"My poor Henri, it makes me shiver to hear you talk like that! He will be your undoing, unless you are his tool. Ah . . . why cannot I go with you . . . but no! I should be nothing but a danger to you. I have to hide myself. But you will have Monsieur de Thou near to you, my boy, will you not?" The old man tried to control himself. "He is the friend of your boyhood, and rather older than you are, a wise young man who has thought much and formed ideas of his own. You must listen to what he says."

"Why, of course, my dear Abbé. You can rely on my friendship for him. Our love has never ceased. . . ."

"But your letters to him ceased some time ago, I believe?" said the old man with a half smile.

"Forgive me, dear Abbé. I did write to him once—and again yesterday, to inform him that the Cardinal had sent for me to the Court."

"You mean to say he sent for you himself?"

Cinq-Mars produced the Cardinal's letter to his mother, and bit by bit his old tutor began to calm down a little.

"Well, well," he muttered, "maybe things are not so bad after all. A captain of the Guards at twenty years of age . . . a promising chance for a lad . . . it might be worse" And he smiled.

And the boy, enchanted with the smile that accorded so well with all his youthful hopes of pleasure, love and glory, flung himself into the old man's arms and embraced him.

The Abbé, however, freed himself from his impulsive

pupil, and began to walk up and down the room once more, reflecting and shaking his head, while Cinq-Mars, not daring to interrupt, followed him with his eyes, becoming more and more affected by the priest's serious aspect.

The latter finally sat down again and, speaking very gravely, said :

" Listen to me. Your hopes are as dear to my heart as they are to your own, but I must admit I find them excessive and not too well founded. If the Cardinal had merely wanted to show his friendship and gratitude towards your family, he would hardly have favoured you so highly as this. He has his own reasons for wanting you. From what he has heard, he considers you a suitable person to fulfil some purpose best known to himself. He will favour you and give you preferment, but think of my words when occasion arises. Things being as they are, I think you will do well to receive what Fate offers you, for it is thus that all fortunes are made. The important thing is not to let yourself be blinded and enslaved. Try not to be duped by favours, my boy, and not to lose your head when Fortune smiles at you. And don't be angry at the thought of it, for it has happened to wiser men than you. Write to me often, the same as you do to your mother ; see as much as you can of M. de Thou, and we will all do our best to help and advise you. And lastly, my son, do me the kindness to shut that window, from whence a draught is blowing on to my head, and I will tell you what has been happening in this town."

Henri, hoping that the moral part of this discourse was now over, and that it only remained for him to hear the story part, quickly closed the shabby old window-frame, covered with cob-webs, and resumed his seat without a word.

" Now that I come to think of it, I believe it may be as well for you to have passed this way, however sad the experience. It will serve to show you a side of human nature that has not yet been revealed to you. And

besides, I hope that the issue may yet be without blood, and that the letter we have written to the King may reach him before it is too late."

"I heard them say that it had been intercepted," said Cinq-Mars.

"Then all is over," said the priest, "and the curé is lost. Listen to what I have to say."

"God forbid, my child, that I, your old tutor, should be the one to undo my own handwork and undermine your faith. Cherish that simple belief in your heart, by which your family have lived. Our fathers, may be, knew better how to live by it than we do, though the greatest captains of our age still own to it without a blush. Never forget that your sword is drawn in the service of God. But that is not all. Beware the power of hypocrisy. For where men are, there you will find it, waiting to attack your weakest spot, through the means of your religion. Learn to distinguish the protests of extravagance from the voice of your own true conscience, and never raise your hand against your better self, or use religion's sacred name in false witness against the inward truth."

"But, my father, why should I?" cried Henri d'Effiat. And he clasped his hands.

"It is easily done," continued the Abbé, "and you yourself have partly witnessed such a thing to-day. Heaven send that you will not see worse things yet! Above all, whatever things you may be about to behold, whatever crime may be revealed to you, make not one movement, and utter not one sound to show what you are thinking. I conjure you by the name of your mother and all those dear to you. I know your impetuous nature—the same as your father's before you. Control yourself, or you are lost. I have seen you too many times the slave of impulse. It does you no good, and can result in much harm. If you only knew the superiority a calm man has over all his fellow beings! The ancient races placed *detachment* in the forefront of all godly attributes. They knew what they were about. Witness this trial

that is about to take place. It is good that you should. But keep calm. As for myself, I am about to flee from the consequences of my own folly. Listen, and I will tell you how a bald-headed old man can be just as childish as a curly-headed lad ! ”

He stroked the young man's head and went on with his story :

“ I was as curious as the rest of them to see these devils that had entered into the nuns, and hearing that they had declared their gift of tongues, I took it upon myself to question them in Greek instead of in Latin. The mother superior is a beautiful woman, but she could not answer in that language. And then the doctor, Duncan, remarked that it was curious how the demon, who professed to be omniscient, should make such horrid blunders. The exorcists were furious. They cried that I should have known that there were demons more ignorant than any peasant, and added that no man could doubt their physical powers, seeing that certain of the spirits had declared they would raise the cap from the head of Monsieur Laubardemont. Whereupon the doctor, a wise man full of sense—though a little inclined to mockery—thought fit to pull a string that he had discovered fastened to a pillar behind a sacred picture, quite close to the Crown Prosecutor ; this time they called him a heretic, and I doubt things would have gone badly with him had not the Maréchal de Brèze been his protector. And then M. le Comte de Lude appeared, with all his usual calmness, and begged that he might behold the exorcists at work. Father Lactance—that Capucin monk with the black robe and the harsh face—undertook Sister Agnes and Sister Claire, lifting up their hands, fixing his gaze upon them as a serpent watches a dove, and calling out in a terrible voice, ‘ *Quis te misit, Diabole ?* ’ And with one accord they replied : ‘ *Urbanus.* ’ He was going to question them still further when M. de Lude, apparently full of pity, pulled out a little golden box, saying that it was a holy relic he had received from his ancestors, and that he would fain test its powers

against this evil. Father Lactance, overjoyed, seized upon the box, and no sooner had he touched the two nuns with it on the forehead than they began to contort themselves in all kinds of ways, twisting their feet and biting their hands; Lactance thundered forth his exhortations, Barré cast himself on his knees, together with all the old women, while Mignon and the judges looked on and applauded. Laubardemont remained motionless, making the sign of the cross. No sooner had M. de Lude taken back his box than the nuns were perfectly calm again.

" 'I hardly think now,' said Lactance, full of pride, 'that you will doubt the efficacy of your holy heirloom.'

" 'No more than that of the evil spirits,' replied M. de Lude, opening his box. It was empty.

" And all that Lactance replied was: 'Gentlemen, you have been pleased to mock at us.'

" And I could not refrain from calling out: 'Yes, monsieur, as you, too, have been making mock of God and all His creatures.' And that, my dear boy, is why you see me in these seven-leagued boots, so heavy I can hardly walk in them, and with pistols in my hand; for our friend Laubardemont has ordered that my person be attainted, and old though it may be, I still wish to keep it for my own use."

" But," exclaimed Cinq-Mars, "is he really as powerful as all this?"

" More than you and I have any idea of. I know that the afflicted abbess is his niece, and that he has been provided with an order of arrest against her, enabling him to carry on the trial in spite of all appeals to Parliament, on behalf of Urbain Grandier."

" And what are *his* offences?" asked the young man, more and more interested.

" Those of a strong character and a superior mind—a will that has brought him into conflict with the powers-that-be, and a deep passion that has taken possession of his heart, and made him guilty of the one and only carnal sin which his life has ever known, and that would never

have been brought to light, but for the private papers which they stole from his old mother of eighty. In them they read of his love for the beautiful Madeleine de Brou, who had refused to marry, and desired to take the veil. Would that it might have protected her from to-day's spectacle ! Grandier's eloquence, and his great beauty of appearance have had their natural effect on the women who came from far and wide to hear him ; I have myself seen them faint during his sermons, and others cry out that it was an angel who spoke, and touch his clothes and kiss his hands, as he descended from the pulpit. Certain it is that nothing but his beauty could have surpassed the wonder of his preaching, for truly it was the flame of all the prophets that descended on his head, filling his voice with a divine compassion for the evils of mankind, and the tears caused by the sufferings of others."

The good priest paused for a moment for his own voice had become husky, and his eyes were suspiciously damp ; his little round face, born to be merry, was doubly pathetic from the fact that sadness seemed a stranger to its nature. Cinq-Mars, much touched, pressed his hand without saying a word, for fear of interrupting him. The Abbé pulled out his red handkerchief, wiped his eyes, and continued :

" This is the second time that Urbain's enemies have attacked him ; he has already been accused of casting evil spells upon the nuns, and examined by holy priests, wise magistrates and learned doctors, all of whom have declared him perfectly innocent. The good Bishop of Bordeaux himself selected examiners to deal with the exorcists, who departed with all speed. But, humiliated with all this publicity, and shamed at seeing the good King's reception of Grandier when he went to Paris and cast himself upon the royal mercy, they realised that his victory meant their ruin ; the convent of the Ursuline nuns had already been the scene of a disreputable spectacle : over a hundred persons were compromised in this attempt to overthrow the curé, and this first

reverse only made them all the more determined. And here is the trick that has been evolved by these wicked men.

“Do you know the famous Capucin whom the Cardinal employs in all his schemes, consulting and despising him at one and the same time? He it is whom the monks of Loudon have employed. A woman of the neighbourhood, named Hamon, had the good fortune to please the Queen on her last visit here, and finally entered her service. You have heard of the hatred that separates the Cardinal’s Court from that of Anne of Austria, of the constant struggle between them for the favour of the King, and how no citizen of France can know which of these two suns shall shine upon him in the morning. At a time when the Cardinal was out of favour, there appeared a satire from the Queen’s Court, ill written and worse conceived, but casting such aspersions upon the birth and person of His Eminence, that his enemies immediately seized upon it and used it to his detriment. It brought to light mysteries and intrigues which he believed were known to none; and having read this anonymous pamphlet, he determined to discover its author. At this time the monks of this little town were writing to Father Joseph that a prolonged correspondence between Grandier and the women Hamon left no doubt whatever that he was the author of the work in question. He had already published religious works and books of prayer, the style of which alone was sufficient to make it clear that writing such as this, reeking of the marketplace, could never have come from such a pen; but the Cardinal, who for some time past had been prejudiced against Urbain, desired he should be guilty, remembering amongst other things how, in the days when he was only Prior of Coussay, Grandier had disputed with him for precedence, and ultimately had his way; I fear that fatal step of his before the Cardinal will lead to nothing but his grave”

The Abbé smiled sadly as he spoke these words.

“What! You really think it will go as far as that?”

"I do, my boy, I fear the end is death. Already they have taken away from his poor old mother the papers that absolved her son, which she treasured as his only hold on life; already they have seen fit to regard a work of his on the celibacy of the priesthood as tending to promote seditious thoughts. No doubt he was guilty to this extent, and however pure the love may be, it is a grievous fault in one whom the Almighty has taken for His service. But heresy was the last thing in the mind of this poor priest, and it was only the triviality of the few charges they could bring against him that caused them to revive their accusation of sorcery, that had long died down, and which the Cardinal now pretended to believe, establishing a new tribunal in this city with Laubardemont at the head of it: sufficient sign of death! Ah! Heaven protect us from that worst corruption of all Governments—the *coup d'état*!"

At this moment a horrible cry was heard to come from the other side of the courtyard; the terrified Abbé rose to his feet, and Cinq-Mars did the same.

"It is a woman's cry," said the old man.

"It is too horrible!" exclaimed the youth. "What is it?" he called to his servants, who were listening outside.

They replied that nothing more was to be heard.

"It is well," said the priest. "Whatever it was, it is over!" And he closed the window and put his hands over his eyes.

"The sound of it!" he muttered. "Ah, my God! Something dreadful has been happening. I can talk to you no longer, my dear Henri. May God have you in His keeping. Kneel down and receive my blessing."

Cinq-Mars did as he was told. He felt the touch of the old man's lips upon his hair, and almost immediately he was raised to his feet again and the priest was saying to him:

"And now you must be off without delay, or they may come and find you here. Leave your men and your servants here; wrap yourself in your cloak and go. I

have much writing to get through before the darkness comes, and I can start on my journey into Italy."

For the last time they embraced, and Henri promised faithfully to write. The Abbé gazed at his retreating figure through the window, crying out to him : " Whatever happens remember to be prudent ! " And as his pupil vanished from his sight he breathed one last prayer after him, which ended with a sigh of, " Poor boy ! "

CHAPTER IV

THE TRIAL.

IN spite of the secret tribunals so much favoured by Richelieu, the judges had desired that the Curé of Loudon should be tried in public. They soon regretted it, and realised the failure of their attempts of the past six months to impress the public mind through mummery and tricks. For it was not with the sanction of the people that this pre-ordained execution of the unhappy curé was about to be put into force.

Laubardemont was a particular kind of vulture whom the Cardinal used in cases requiring prompt and certain vengeance, and there was certainly good reason for the choice. On this occasion, however, he made one false step—that of permitting the public to be present at the trial. His intention was to intimidate through fear—but it was the fear that comes through horror, that he was about to raise in their souls.

People were already surging into the hall when Cinq-Mars arrived upon the scene, and so he entered with them, and managed to secure a place behind a pillar, where he could see without being seen. Although it was broad daylight, the room was lit by torches, mostly placed at that end of the hall where the judges were ranged behind their long table. All the hangings were of black, which enhanced the pallor of their faces. On the left was the seat reserved for the prisoner, and on the cloth which

covered it were painted golden flames, signifying hell-fire. The accused was already seated, surrounded by archers, his hands held in chains by two monks feigning to be overcome with terror at his slightest movement, as if they held a wolf or tiger in leash, or that their clothes were in danger of catching fire from the flames. They also took the utmost care that the people should not see the prisoner's face.

M. de Laubardemont presided at the seat of judgment, commanding the whole situation from the raised dais on which he sat ; he wore a long scarlet robe, and a black skull cap was on his head ; for the most part he was occupied in glancing through numerous papers, and distributing them amongst the judges. The prosecutors—all in clerical dress—were seated at the judges' right hand. Amongst them was Father Lactance, easily distinguished by his simple Capucin's robe, his tonsure and the ruggedness of his features. The Bishop of Poitiers was installed within his chair, and behind various tables were a number of women wearing veils. At the judges' feet swarmed a disreputable crowd of people—taken from the very dregs, both men and women—hovering around the six young Ursuline nuns, as though in horror of their presence. They were the witnesses.

The rest of the hall was filled with the populace, sombre and silent, clinging on to doorways and pillars, full of apprehension on behalf of the accused. A quantity of archers carrying long pikes, were lined around the sides of the walls, as a precautionary measure against a crowd already inclined to be threatening.

At a sign from the President, the witnesses were told to withdraw, which they did, through a little door held open by a soldier. The Mother Superior of the Ursulines was seen to pause in front of M. de Laubardemont, and say to him, in a firm voice :

“ Monsieur, you have deceived me.”

He remained motionless and she passed on. The silence of death reigned throughout the hall.

A judge from Orleans, of the name of Houmain, arose

with much solemnity, and read through the accusation in a voice so low that it was impossible to hear one word of it, except such fragments of sentences as the people were intended to hear. With regard to the proofs of the case, they were grouped into two divisions--those concerning the depositions of the sixty-two witnesses, and the others and more important, concerning the exorcisms of the holy fathers there present. Whereupon he made the sign of the Cross.

The fathers Lactance, Barré and Mignon bowed low, and all three made the same holy sign.

"Gentlemen," continued Houmain, now turning to the judges, "you have already had placed before you the essence of white roses, and the manuscript, signed with the sorcerer's blood, together with a copy of the pact which he made with the Devil himself, without which his powers were null and void. I need only conclude with the horror of the final words, written at the end of the parchment, 'Midnight, in hell, within Lucifer's chamber!'"

A rough burst of laughter was heard from the midst of the crowd. The President reddened, and signed to the archers, who searched in vain for the delinquent. A murmur arose from the crowd, but the presence of the halberdiers kept it in check, and silence reigned again, broken only by the accusatory voice.

Bit by bit the fantastic evidence accumulated. The names of the devils--and truly it was legion--issuing from the mouths of the possessed; the immodest behaviour of the Mother Superior and her two nuns under their foul domination; the impious attempts of certain unbelievers to test the evil spirits' gift of tongues, as to which, to avoid all further questioning, they would naturally feign ignorance; the false testimony of certain interested persons, resulting in the scandalous fabrication of the cord attached to the President's hat; and above all, the irrefutable proof, just come to light, in the shape of the death of a young girl of high birth found expiring in the street by Father Mignon, to whom he had but

pronounced the words, "Grandier is on the point of death," when straightway she cried out and fell down lifeless, deprived by her evil demon of the briefest respite in which to commend her soul to the holy Mother of God.

A wave of indignation now arose among the listeners, and the word *assassin* became audible; the soldiers sternly called for silence, and the very strength of curiosity prevailed, when once again the voice resumed:

"Gentlemen, I have to relate an infamous thing. On this young woman's body was found a book. It was in the handwriting of Urbain Grandier."

And he pulled from among his papers a book bound in parchment.

"God in Heaven!" exclaimed Urbain from where he sat.

"Take care," cried out the judges to the archers who surrounded him.

"The evil spirit is once more about to come forth," said Father Lactance. "Tighten his cords."

It was done. The Prosecutor continued:

"Her name was Madeleine de Brou, aged nineteen years."

"Holy Father--not that! Holy Father, spare me!" The prisoner's cry rang out through the hall, and he fell swooning to the floor.

The crowd was moved by varying sensations. "Poor man, he loved her," some were heard to utter. "Such a beautiful young lady, too," said the women to one another. Compassion was obviously getting the upper hand. Cold water was thrown over Grandier and he was once more placed in his seat as the indictment continued:

"It is our duty to read out loud to you the commencement of this book." Whereupon the voice was heard relating the words of Urbain Grandier, written to strengthen the spirit of the woman he loved. Not a phrase that might not have fallen from the lips of an angel; the spiritual communion of two souls united by all that was pure and holy; an exhortation to courage

and faith in the love proceeding from none but the Father Himself. . . .

Suddenly, before the end of the passage had been read, the door opened, and the witnesses appeared. The judges, much perturbed, began whispering to one another. Laubardemont endeavoured to make signs to the priests to ascertain whether this interruption was intentional on their part, but he was too far away from them to make his meaning clear; neither could they convey to him that their surprise was equal to his own. And now, to the stupefaction of all concerned, three women advanced, clad each in a single white robe, feet bare, with cords round their necks and candles in their hands. This was the Mother Superior, followed by her two nuns, Agnes and Claire. All of them were weeping; the Mother Superior was pale as death, while a spirit of the intensest resolution burned in her eyes as she knelt down, together with her companions. The surprise was too great for anyone to stop the proceedings, and with a clear, firm voice, that echoed into the furthest corners of the hall, she pronounced these words:

"In the name of the Holy Trinity, I, Jeanne de Belfiel, daughter of Baron de Cose, Mother Superior of the Ursuline Convent at Loudon, ask pardon of God and man for the crime I have committed in falsely accusing the innocent Urbain Grandier. My possession by evil spirits was false, the words were put in my mouth, and remorse is gnawing at my heart"

"Bravo!" cried out the crowd, clapping their hands. The judges rose, the archers looked doubtfully at the President, who remained in his seat, obviously perturbed.

"Let no man speak," he cried in his strident voice. "Soldiers, do your duty."

The strength of this man lay in his supreme belief in the power that supported him; no thoughts of Heaven had ever entered into his head. Consequently he was never really afraid.

"Holy Fathers, what have you to say?" he asked the priests.

"That the devil is trying to save his companion! *Obmutesce Satanas!*" cried out Father Lactance with a terrible voice, apparently making one more effort to exorcise the Mother Superior.

No spark applied to powder ever produced a greater effect than did these words. Jeanne de Belſiel suddenly rose to her feet in all the youth and beauty that her scanty wrappings only served to accentuate, like a soul risen up from hell to confront its seducer. She fixed her dark eyes upon the priests, forcing Father Lactance to drop his gaze before hers, while with her bare feet she took two steps towards him. The candle held in her hand might have been the sword of an avenging angel.

"Silence, imposter!" The words were almost hurled at him. "The demon that possessed me was—you! You have deceived me. And to-day, the day that he is about to be put on his trial, I know it, and will speak!"

"Woman! The evil spirit that informs you is leading you astray!"

"Say rather, that my contrition is making all things clear! My daughters, speak for me. Your unhappiness is as great as mine. Is he not innocent?"

"We swear it," replied the two kneeling sisters. And they burst into tears, while Sister Agnes stretched out her arms to the crowd, crying:

"Help me! They will punish me! They will put me to death!"

And, clinging to her companion, she cast herself into the arms of the onlookers, who received her with acclamations of joy, and assurances of their protection. Curses began to make themselves heard, and the noise of men beating their sticks upon the floor. The judges still whispered together, while Laubardemont signed to the soldiers as to what portions of the crowd most required their attention—more particularly pointing out the little group in black. The Bishop of Poitiers remained motionless in his seat, oblivious of the glances in his direction, for he was one of those aged men, dead ten

years before their actual departure from this life ; his eyes were veiled in a semi-sleep ; his half-open mouth murmured automatically the pious words, all habit and no meaning, that ruled his daily life. The only faculty he still retained was that of recognising a strong man when he saw him. Power to him meant obedience—hence his assent to the decree of the Sorbonne doctors concerning the possession of the nuns. The consequences of the act were not within his jurisdiction. So there he sat, to all intents and purposes devoid of life, serenely contemplating—nothing at all.

Father Lactance, beginning to recover his presence of mind, turned towards the President and said :

“ As to our Mother Superior being possessed by the powers of evil, I think Heaven has now bestowed upon us the strongest proof of all. What else could have made her thus forget her modesty, and the strictness of her order ? ”

“ Would that all men on earth were here to see me now,” cried Jeanne de Belfiel, nothing daunted. “ No humiliation is great enough, no punishment from Heaven too hard, for one who has been the accomplice of such a man as you.”

Laubardemont's brow was moist with sweat. But he was not yet conquered.

“ The whole thing is a fantastic fairy tale. What, then, constrained you to do this thing, my sister ? ”

The girl summoned all her strength together, and placing her hand over her heart, as though she would herself tear it from her bosom, she fixed her gaze on Urbain Grandier, and uttered the one word, “ Love ! ”

The people shivered. Urbain, who since his faintness had sat with his head bent forward, almost devoid of life, now slowly raised his eyes to her, and came back into the world once more to undergo fresh sufferings. The young penitent continued :

“ Yes—the passion that he never even realised in all its fulness, while yet it shone out of the deep pureness of his eyes, and throbbed in every tone of his voice,

in the words he preached to us ! Urbain is as pure as an angel, and as good as the man who knows what real love can mean. I did not know. It was you who told me that"—and here her speech became more rapid, as she turned in her fury of indignation towards the three priests—"in relating the cruel vengeance you have taken this very day on my unhappy rival ! Alas ! I only desired they should be parted ! It was a crime, I know, but I come of an Italian mother, and jealousy burned hot within me ; and you would have allowed me to see Urbain every day ; he would have been my friend. . . ."

She was silent, then cried again :

"I tell all of you people he is innocent ! Martyr, I beg for your forgiveness. I kneel at your feet !"

And, weeping bitterly, she cast herself at Urbain's knees.

Urbain lifted his manacled hands to bestow his blessing upon her, and said, in his gentle though feeble voice :

"Go in peace, my sister. I pardon you in the name of Him whom I shall so soon see ; I have told you before now, and you now see the truth of my words, that passion is a fearful thing until it is directed in God's service."

Laubardemont's face now flushed scarlet for the second time.

"Miserable man !" he exclaimed. "You presume to speak in the name of Holy Church ?"

"I have not yet left its fold," replied Urbain.

"Remove this woman," ordered the President.

As the soldiers came forward to obey, they discovered that she had knotted the cord around her neck to strangling point. Terror seized on all the women present ; some of them were carried out fainting, but the hall still surged with townsfolk ; the ranks soon closed again, and newcomers filtered in from the street.

The horrified judges rose up, and the President tried to clear the Court, but the people still remained, in a sort of terrorised stupor, and the soldiery was not numerous

enough to take effect. There was nothing for it but to announce that the tribunal would retire for the space of half-an-hour. The judges withdrew, and only the populace remained, sullenly waiting.

CHAPTER V

THE MARTYR

So much had the public been engrossed by this semi-trial, with all its formalities and varied interruptions, that up to now there had been little or no individual conversation. Various ejaculations had been uttered, but all more or less of a general nature, and no man knew his neighbour's thoughts, or, for that matter, his own either. Once left to itself, the crowd exploded in a veritable torrent of words. But, through the chaos, one or two voices were to be distinguished above all the rest, like trumpets sounding through the bass strings of an orchestra.

In those days it was easy for any perpetrator of monstrous fables to exploit the primitive simplicity of the poorer folk for his own ends. As usual, foolish fear was the predominating note. "Of a truth, monsieur, one hardly knows what to think." . . . "Strange happenings indeed, madame." . . . "These curious days in which we live." . . . "I would never have believed it, had I not seen it with my own eyes." . . . Etc., etc. All the customary crowd-remarks, revealing them as the prey of the first strong man who chooses to impose upon them. They it was who formed the ground base, but from the little knot in black, different phrases could be distinguished: "Do they imagine we are going to submit to treatment of this sort?" . . . "Burning the letter we wrote to the King?" . . . "The insolence of it!" . . . "If he only knew." . . . "The rogues!" . . . "The savages!" . . . "Perdition take their clever juggling tricks!" . . . "Would they kill him under our very noses?" . . . "Afraid of a lot of archers?"

... "Not we." That was the trumpet note, rising above all other tones in the orchestra.

And now the young lawyer was to be seen, mounting on a bench, tearing up his paper note-book into a thousand pieces, and crying with a loud voice :

"I destroy the defence prepared by me in favour of the prisoner ; discussion has been suppressed ; I am not allowed to plead ! To all you people alone can I speak, and I am glad of it. Which of these lying judges would recognise a truth if they saw it ? Is there one worthy to hear an honest man speak, or look him in the face ? What is there for me to say ? They know the truth too well ! It lies within their souls, devouring their hearts as does a serpent ; they take shelter and tremble in the very place where their victim is devoured—tremble because they have heard the voices of their three women victims. What purpose had I but to defend Urbain Grandier ? And now, what eloquence of mine can equal their poor weak voices ? Or prove his innocence more truly ? Heaven itself is arming on his side in calling them thus to their repentance, and Heaven will achieve the work it has begun !"

"*Vade retro Satanas !*" The sound floated down through a window high above.

Fournier paused a moment, then went on : "Hear the way they parody the sacred words of scripture ! If I am not much mistaken, they are using them but to pave the way towards some fiendish cruelty."

"But," cried the others around him, "what is there we can do ? What are they doing to him ?"

"Stay here as calmly as you can," replied the young lawyer. "The force and wisdom of a crowd lies often in its waiting power. One silent look of yours will strike fear into their souls."

"It looks as though they were frightened to appear," remarked the Count de Lude.

"What would I not give to see that red devil again ?" This from Grand Ferré, who had been closely observing every detail of the proceedings.

"And our good priest, too," murmured the old peasant, Leroux, with a glance at his sons, who were whispering together and casting ominous looks towards the soldiers, some of them even beginning to mock their uniforms and grimace at them.

Cinq-Mars was still standing beside his pillar, wrapped in his black cloak, observing and listening with all his might and main; his heart was filled with rage and bitterness; in spite of himself he was seized with a longing for revenge, a vague desire to strike and kill—the first effect produced on a young man's soul by the sight of an evil deed; later on, sadness takes the place of anger, and later still, indifference and scorn; while, last of all, comes deliberate admiration for rogues great enough to achieve success; but that stage is not reached until all that is divine in man is trampled into dust.

At the present moment a group of women had collected to the right of the hall, near by the raised dais of the judges. They were gathered around a child of about eight years old, who, greatly daring, had swarmed up one of the pillars, being helped by the arms of his sister, Martine, who had just now been so unmercifully teased by the soldier Grand-Ferré. The boy, tired of being unable to see anything, had managed to reach a little gap in the wall, hoping to unearth a swallow's nest or some such coveted treasure, but having once looked through to the other side, his heart failed him, and, clinging with both hands to the bars of an old shrine erected for St. Jerome, he cried out piteously:

"Oh, sister, sister, give me your hand and help me down!"

"But what is it you have seen?" cried Martine to him.

"Oh! I dare not tell you. Let me down!" And he began to cry.

"Come, come," all the women exhorted him; "don't be afraid, child. Stay where you are, and tell us what it is you are looking at."

"They are fastening the curé on to two big boards,

with cords all round them . . . and they are tearing his limbs. . . .”

“ Ah, then they have taken to the torture ! ” said an old townsman near by. “ Go on looking, my boy, and tell us everything you see.”

The boy, slightly reassured, put his head through the hole once more, and drawing it out again, exclaimed :

“ I can’t see the curé any more, as all the judges are standing round looking at him and their long robes get in the way. And all the monks are bending over him too.”

Curiosity had now attracted a number of people to the pillar where the child was standing, and in breathless silence they all stood and waited, as though the fate of all the world depended on his voice. Again he called out :

“ And now I can see the executioner, who is putting four pieces of wood between the cords. . . . Ah ! Holy Mother of God ! How angry all the monks are with him, because he will not speak ! Now they are blessing the hammer and the nails. . . . Mamma. . . . Mamma . . . Give me your hand. . . . I want to come down ! ”

The child turned round, but in place of his mother he saw himself surrounded by a group of grave and melancholy men, signing to him to stay where he was and continue. Not daring to disobey them, he returned to his window, trembling all over his little body.

“ Oh ! I can see Father Lactance now and Father Barré, and they are placing pieces of wood themselves . . . and his limbs are beginning to tear. . . . And he is white . . . oh, dreadfully white . . . and I believe he is saying his prayers ; now his head has fallen right back . . . as though he were dead. . . . Ah . . . take me away ! ”

And he fell into the arms of the young lawyer, as well as M. de Lude and Cinq-Mars, who were approaching him.

“ *Deus stetit in synagoga deorum ; in medio autem Deus dijudicat . . .* ” chanted the hard nasal voices

floating through the little window, and for a long time the droning of psalms continued, interspersed with hammering blows-- the devil's work keeping time to celestial music ; but the blows fell with a dull sound, and it was only too easy to believe that the anvil they fell on was a human body.

" Silence," exclaimed Fournier, " he is saying something ! The singing has stopped and the blows too."

And truly a feeble voice was heard to murmur : " Holy fathers, I entreat you, relax the strain of your torments but a little, for fear my soul shall despair and I seek to take refuge in death."

At this point the cries of the populace resounded throughout the room, while numbers of angry men swarmed over the dais, making straight for the astonished and vacillating soldiers, seizing them by the arms and thrusting them back against the walls. A great wave of people beat upon the doors leading to the torture chamber, making them groan beneath their weight, and threatening to break them down, while an angry murmur arose of a kind to strike terror into the hearts of the judges on the other side.

" They have gone ! They have taken him away," a man cried out.

The crowd stopped short, and changing its direction rapidly, flowed out into the streets, where the utmost confusion prevailed.

Night had come down while this lengthy trial proceeded, bringing with it torrents of rain. The darkness was terrifying ; women screamed as they slipped upon the roadway, or were pushed out of the path by the horses of the men-at-arms ; the ceaseless, angry cries of the men, the perpetual ringing of the bells to announce the torture, the groans of the agonised victim, and the rumbling of distant thunder, all combined to produce an effect of chaos. A few sinister torches lighted at the corners of the streets threw their flickering light upon the mounted men galloping their horses through the crowds that thronged the roadways ; one or two tiles

were hurled at them as they went on their way to the Place St. Pierre, but these missiles seldom struck their mark, more often injuring innocent men near by. Confusion was at its height when the multitude, having reached the Place St. Pierre by devious routes, found their market place barricaded on every side, and filled with archers and men-at-arms. Waggon's were drawn across the openings of the side streets, guarded by sentinels with muskets. In the middle of the square a scaffold had been erected of enormous beams, with a colossal stake on the summit, close to which stood a man clothed all in red, holding a torch in his hand, that all might behold him from a distance. At his feet a brazier was glowing, protected from the rain by sheets of iron.

This sight struck terror into the heart of the populace. For several moments nothing was to be heard but the noise of the falling rain and the muttering of the thunder, which was growing nearer.

Meanwhile Cinq-Mars, together with M. de Lude and Fournier, and the other more important men, had taken shelter from the storm on the steps of the Church of St. Croix, which raised them a little distance above the crowd. The scaffold was facing them, and their refuge commanded a view of the entire square. The market place was completely empty, and from all sides streams of swirling water flowed around ; bit by bit lights began to appear in the surrounding windows, and the heads of the men and women thrust out upon the balconies were sharply outlined in silhouette.

Young d'Effiat stood regarding all this with the utmost horror. He had not been brought up to recognise the depths that man can sink to, when a prey to hatred and ambition, and he could not understand how so much wickedness could be wrought without some powerful and secret motive. So incredible did he find the audacity of the whole condemnation, that its very cruelty began almost to be justified in his sight, while his soul was filled with the same secret horror that caused the silence of the crowd ; he was almost forgetting the interest that

the unfortunate Urbain had inspired in him, and was beginning to ask himself whether it were not possible that some secret communication with the powers of evil had not justified the rigour of his punishment ; the public revelations of the nuns, as well as the facts related to him by his old tutor, were already losing their hold upon his memory—such is the power of success, even in the rarest minds ! The voice of a man's conscience must be strong indeed to withstand the appeal of force. Already the young traveller was wondering if torture had not wrung some horrible admission from the prisoner, when suddenly the two large doors of the church behind him were thrown open, and a flood of torch light revealed the judges and the prelates, surrounded by a guard of archers ; in their midst walked Urbain, supported—or rather carried—by six men clad in dark penitent's dress, for his limbs were bound together with blood-stained bandages, and seemed too broken to support him. Although it was not more than two hours since Cinq-Mars had seen him, he would scarcely have recognised the face that had impressed him so much during the trial ; not a vestige of colour remained ; the pallor of his skin was like ivory ; the blood no longer seemed to course through his veins, and the sole remaining sign of life was in his eyes, which seemed to have become twice their usual size, as he cast piteous glances at the multitude. His chestnut locks were cut short around his neck ; he was clothed from head to foot in a long white robe, long-sleeved, with a slight tinge of yellow that smelt of sulphur ; a long stout cord was round his neck and fell below his waist. He was like the phantom of a saint.

Urbain stopped—or rather was halted—on the steps of the church ; the Capucin Lactance placed a burning torch in his right hand, and holding it there, spoke the following words to him in a tone of merciless severity :

“ Ask pardon from your God, and make such honourable amends as in you lies, for the crime you have committed of black magic.”

The unfortunate man, raising his eyes to Heaven, was scarcely able to gasp out his reply :

" In the name of the living God, you lie, Laubardemont ! They have taken away from me my confessor, and I have been compelled to confess my faults to God Himself, to Whom in His mercy I attest that I have never been a magician ; never known mysteries other than those of the Holy Catholic Church, in which I die ; that I have sinned grievously against myself, but never against God and our Blessed Saviour . . . "

" Cease your blasphemy," cried the Capucin, pretending to stop the words from his mouth before he could pronounce the Redeemer's name ; " hardened sinner that you are, return to the demon that sent you forth."

He signed to four priests, who came forward with holy-water sprinklers, with which to exorcise the air that the magician breathed, the ground he stood on, and the wood that was about to burn him. During this ceremony the lieutenant gabbled through the indictment, still to be found in the records of this trial, dated 16th of August, 1639, declaring " Urbain Grandier, duly attainted and convicted of the crime of magic, of evil relations with the devil, corruption of the Ursuline nuns, and of various citizens," etc.

The reader was suddenly checked by a flash of lightning, and turning to M. de Laubardemont by his side, asked him whether, in view of the storm, the execution should not be postponed until the next day. Whereon the latter replied :

" The decree pronounces execution to be carried out within twenty-four hours. Have no fear of this incredulous mob. This will convince them."

All the most prominent people were now gathered together on the church steps, Cinq-Mars among them, and several now stepped forward.

" . . . The magician was unable to pronounce the name of the Holy Saviour, and has repulsed His holy image. . . ."

Lactance now came forward, making his way through

the penitents, carrying in his hand an enormous metal crucifix, with which he cautiously approached the prisoner's lips. The latter immediately recoiled, and collecting all his strength, made a gesture with his arm so violent that the cross was seen to fall out of the monk's hands.

"Behold!" cried the latter. "He has thrown down the Holy Crucifix!"

A doubtful murmur was heard among the crowd.

"Blasphemy!" cried out all the priests, and they advanced towards the scaffold.

But Cinq-Mars, gliding behind a pillar, had observed everything with greedy eyes, and had seen with amazement that the crucifix, having fallen on the lower steps, that were exposed to the rain, had smoked and faintly hissed, with the sound of hot metal suddenly plunged into water. While the public attention was diverted elsewhere, he crept forward and touched the cross. Immediately he recoiled, with a burn upon his hand. Bursting with indignation, and all the fury of a mind naturally honest, he put the crucifix under his cloak, and advancing to Laubardemont, struck him with it upon the forehead.

"Scoundrel!" he shouted. "Yourself shall bear the brand of the red-hot iron!" Whereupon the crowd surged forward.

"Arrest that madman," vainly called out the indignant magistrate. But the next moment he found himself seized by the hands of men that howled at him: "Justice! In the name of the King!"

"We are lost!" said Lactance. "Quick—to the scaffold!"

The penitents dragged Urbain towards the square, whilst the judges and the soldiers re-entered the church to deal with the furious citizens; the executioner, without having the time to bind up his victim, hastened to place him in position on the wood and to apply the fatal torch. But the rain still fell in torrents, and no sooner had the planks been lit than they fizzled and went out smoking. In vain Lactance himself, together with the other priests, endeavoured to stir up the fire.

Nothing could withstand the rain that fell from heaven.

The tumult on the church steps was already extending towards the market place. The cry of "Justice" was repeated and became louder than ever with the discovery just made; two of the barricades had been forced, and notwithstanding three shots fired, the soldiers were being pushed, bit by bit, towards the centre of the square. In vain they steered their horses through the midst of the people; the human waves were too much for them. This struggle lasted for the space of half-an-hour, and always the guards were pushed back towards the scaffold, which was soon hidden from the people's sight.

"Forward, forward!" called out a man's voice. "We'll save him yet. Don't strike the soldiers, but push them back! See for yourselves how God does not wish this man to die! The flames are extinguished once again! Good! Turn that horse back! Push with all your might!"

The guard was broken through and fled on every side, while the crowd rushed shouting towards the place of execution. But all was dark. Even the executioner had disappeared. The planks were pulled apart and scattered; one of them was still feebly glimmering, and by its light could be seen a mass of charred cinders, underneath which, stained with mud and blood, lay a blackened hand, with the iron ring and chain which had protected it from the flames. A woman had the courage to unclasp the fingers; inside them were discovered an ivory cross and an image of Saint Madeleine.

"All that is left of him!" sobbed the woman through her tears.

And a man's voice: "Call them rather a martyr's relics."

CHAPTER VI

THE DREAM

CINQ-MARS, in the midst of all the hubbub created by his recent action, suddenly felt himself seized by the

arm in a grip of iron, pulled through the crowd to the bottom of the steps and from thence pushed behind the wall of the church. And only then did he recognise the face and familiar growling voice of old Grandchamp, scolding him :

“All very fine for you, monsieur, to go attacking thirty musketeers in a wood at Chaumont, when we were all within a stone’s throw, although you never knew it, and in any case it was gentlemen of honour there you had to deal with. But this is a different matter. Your horses and servants are waiting at the bottom of the street, and I implore you to mount instantly and ride straight out of the town—or else to send me back again to Madame la Maréchale, considering I am responsible for your life and limbs, which you are pleased to make so free with.”

Cinq-Mars, although a little taken aback by this summary method of being served, was not too sorry to have his problem solved for him in this manner, having now had time to realise the awkwardness of his predicament, should anyone have recognised him as defying the authority and assaulting the envoy of that very Cardinal who was about to present him to the King. He also reflected that here he was surrounded by the very dregs of the populace, amongst whom he might well blush to find himself. So he followed his old mentor without any arguments, and found, as he had said, that his three other servants were already awaiting him. In spite of the rain and the wind, he got to horse immediately, and, followed by his escort, was soon riding down the main street at a gallop, to avoid all possibility of pursuit.

But scarcely had he left the town than the road became furrowed with ruts, full of water, that forced him to moderate his pace. The rain continued to come down in torrents, and his cloak was soaked through. Soon he felt a thicker one being thrown around his shoulders ; it was old Grandchamp again, fussing around him like a mother.

"Well, Grandchamp, now that we have got out of the fray, tell me how you came to be where you were, instead of waiting with the horses and servants as I told you to," said his master.

"*Parbleu, monsieur!*" replied the old fellow in his best tones of reprimand. "Do you think I am going to obey you any more than M. le Maréchal? When my late master used to tell me to remain in his tent, and then catch sight of me behind him in the thick of the cannon smoke, do you think he stopped to scold me, seeing that he had a fresh mount brought to him when his own horse got killed? Whatever he meant to say he kept it to himself. It is true that during all the forty years I was in his service I never saw him do anything like the things you have been doing during this past two weeks! Ah!"—he added with a sigh—"if this sort of thing is going to go on we are destined to see some pretty times together!"

"But, Grandchamp, did you not see how they had heated that crucifix—the scoundrels? Wouldn't any honest man have got into a rage like I did?"

"Your late father, the Maréchal, would never have done such a thing, monsieur. He would quite quietly have allowed that priest to be burned by all the other priests and would have said to me 'Grandchamp, take care that my horses have been well foddered,' or else, 'Grandchamp, see that the rain doesn't go rusting my sword in its scabbard, or spoiling the powder in my holsters,' for my master thought of everything for himself, and never mixed himself up in other people's affairs. It was his first great principle, and as he was, thanks be to the good God, as fine a soldier as he was a general, he took as good care of his weapons as any foot soldier of them all, and would have never have found himself attacking thirty lively fellows with only one little Court sword by his side."

Cinq-Mars realised only too deeply the weight of these remarks, and began to fear lest the old man should have followed him even further than the wood at Chaumont;

but on this subject he preferred to remain in ignorance, in order to avoid either explanations or commands of silence—in itself equal to an admission of confidence. So he spurred on his horse to get ahead of these rebukes ; but Grandchamp had by no means done with him yet, and instead of riding on the right-hand side of his master, he shifted his position to the left and continued the conversation :

“ Did you really imagine, monsieur, that I would allow you to go here and there, wherever you wish, without being at your elbow ? No, monsieur, I have far too great a respect towards my mistress ever to have her say to me, ‘ Grandchamp, my son has been killed by a musket ball ; why were you not there to receive it in his place ? ’ Or, ‘ He was stabbed in the back by an Italian for being found at night time under the window of a great princess ; why did you not prevent it ? ’ That would be exceedingly unpleasant for me, monsieur, and never has anything of that sort been brought up against me yet. At one time M. le Maréchal lent me to his nephew to go campaigning in the Netherlands, as I am acquainted with Spanish tricks. Well, I managed the affair to my credit, according to my way. When the Count received a bullet in his stomach, I myself collected his horses and mules, his tent and all his equipment, without a handkerchief missing, monsieur, and I can assure you that the horses were as well harnessed and cared for, on coming back to Chaumont, as if the Count had just been ready to start out hunting. I have never yet received anything but compliments from all your family, and I hope I never may.”

“ All right, old friend,” said Henri d’Effiat. “ One day, no doubt, I shall be giving you horses to collect, but in the meantime take charge for me of this large gold purse that I have been on the point of losing these twenty times, and pay my expenses for me as we go. That will save me a lot of trouble.”

“ M. le Maréchal never did that either, monsieur. As Financial Superintendent, he was in the habit of

counting his money with his own hand, and it's my belief that your estate would not be in such a good condition, nor would you be having so many gold pieces to count for yourself if he had done differently. Please be so good as to keep your own purse, and make your own reckonings, for I don't believe you know yourself how much you've got."

"Good heavens, no!"

Grandchamp sighed prodigiously at this contemptuous exclamation.

"Ah, monsieur le Marquis--monsieur le Marquis! And when I think that the great King Henry, before my very eyes, put his chamois gloves in his pocket, for fear the rain might spoil them; when I remember how M. de Rosny used to refuse him money when he considered he had spent too much; when I think . . ."

"When you think, you become a miserable old bore," interrupted the Count, "and it would be more to the point if you would tell me what this black figure is that seems to be walking along in the mud behind us."

"I think it must be some poor peasant woman who is seeking for alms; she finds it easy to follow us, as we can't go any quicker on this sandy ground. It's so thick, our horses are sinking up to the hocks in it, and now that the rain has lifted a little and we can see around, there doesn't seem to be a village or a house within miles of us. I don't know where we shall pass the night but if monsieur will leave it to me, we will cut branches from the trees and bivouac; you will see how I can make a sleeping place from a small piece of earth, as warm to sleep in as any bed."

"I would prefer to go on as far as that light I see on the horizon," said Cinq Mars, "for I fear I am a little feverish and dreadfully thirsty. But go behind now, for I wish to be alone. Rejoin the others and follow where I lead."

Grandchamp obeyed, and consoled himself by instructing Germain, Louis, and Etienne how to discover the lie of the land.

But the young man himself was dropping with weariness. The violent emotions he had gone through that day had shaken him considerably ; and this long journey on horseback, especially these last two days, almost without food, owing to the hurry of events, the sun in the day time, the cold at night time—all things contributed to undermine his delicate constitution. For three long hours he rode silently in front of his men, without the light on the horizon becoming any nearer. Finally he gave up following it with his eyes, his head grew heavy with sleep, and sank upon his chest, while he abandoned the reins to his tired steed, leaving him to follow the principal road of his own accord. His master, meanwhile, was sunk in the gloom of his own thoughts. Would the shining goal of all his ambitions, he wondered, merely evade him like that light on the horizon ? Was it within the bounds of probability that this young Princess, now to be summoned to the Court of Anne of Austria, would continue to refuse the almost royal proposals that were being laid at her feet ? And all for a youth, within almost the lowest ranks of the army, waiting for Fortune to bestow her gifts upon him before the age of love had taken wings and flown ! How could he know even that the vows of his beloved Marie were sincere ? Was it not far more likely that she had deceived even her own self, that the solitude of the country had tuned her soul to all these tender thoughts, and their youth and his own love had done the rest ? Up to now, his beloved had been living in a dream, soon to be dispelled by the Court and royal favours. He had been nothing but a madman to entertain these hopes. . .

And thus it was that doubt, that most cruel of all lovers' torments, began to worm its way into his heart. He felt his head grow heavy with the hot blood mounting in his veins ; more than once he fell forward on his horse's neck, while his eyes were almost closed in sleep. The dark trees growing on either side of the road-way loomed up at him like so many monstrous corpses ; he saw, or thought he saw, the woman, all in black,

whom he had pointed out to Grandchamp, draw near to him, close to his horse's mane, only to flutter her cloak in his face and fly, laughing at him. The sand on the roadway seemed like a river, whose waves were rising up and beating down upon his brain; it flowed around his face and dimmed his sight; he closed his eyes and slept.

Before long he felt that they had stopped. Paralysed with cold, he dimly beheld peasants, and torches, a building and a large room, whither they carried him and laid him on a huge bed, closed all round with curtains, and here he slept again, stupefied by the fever that was burning in his system.

Dreams passed before him more rapidly than grains of sand that ride upon the wind; he lay upon his bed, powerless to stop them. Urbain Grandier in torment, his mother in tears, his old tutor armed to the teeth, Bassompierre laden with chains making a sign of farewell to him as he went by. He passed his hand across his forehead and made a desperate effort to capture the vision now before his eyes: an open place, swarming with foreign people from the North, shouting their cries of joy and savagery, and round them all a guard of fierce French soldiers.

"Come with me," said Marie de Gonzague to him in her gentle voice, and she took his hand. "See, here is a crown for you; here is your throne; come with me!"

And she drew him along with her, while still the people cried and shouted. He walked, and walked, and walked.

"Why are you so sad, since you are a queen?" he asked her, trembling.

But she was very pale and smiled without replying. Then she mounted the steps of the throne and sat upon it, crying to him, "Come," and pulling him by the hand.

But his legs sank beneath him, and he could not move.

"Return thanks to Love," said she, and drew him to her side by the throne. And all the people shouted.

And as he bowed to kiss the hand that helped him—the hand he loved so well—it was the headsman's hand!

“Merciful heavens!” cried Cinq-Mars, and with an agonising gasp, opened his eyes. The shabby inn room was lit by a flickering lamp. He closed his eyes again, for there, close to the bed, he had seen a woman dressed as a nun, young and beautiful, and he thought he was still dreaming.

“Oh Jeanne de Belfiel, is it you? The rain has soaked through your veil, and your beautiful dark hair is all wet! Unhappy woman—why are you here?”

“Ssh! Do not awaken my Urbain; he is sleeping with me in the room next to you. Yes, my hair is wet and my feet also! Look at my feet that used to be so white! See how the mud has soiled them! But I have made a vow that never will I wash them, till I have reached the King’s presence, and obtained mercy for my Urbain. I am going to seek him among his troops, and there I shall speak to him like Grandier taught me to speak, and he will pardon him. But listen! I shall beseech him to pardon you as well. For I have seen death written on your face! Poor boy! You are too young to die, with those beautiful brown curls; all the same you are doomed to death, for on your forehead is a line that never speaks false. The man whom you have struck will smite you down! The cross you struck him with shall be your undoing. Do not hide your head like that beneath the sheets! Have I said anything to grieve you? Or is it that you are in love, poor boy? Ah—do not grieve! I shall not say anything to your mistress. I am mad, maybe, but I am good, and kind, and three days ago I was beautiful as well. And is she beautiful too? Ah—how she will weep for you one day! And if she can weep she will be happy.”

And Jeanne all at once began to recite the office for the dead, with incredible rapidity, still sitting on the bed and telling the beads of the long rosary in her fingers.

Suddenly the door opened, and with one quick look she fled through a little door into the passage.

“What the devil might this be? Is it a hobgoblin

or an angel gabbling the prayers for dead folk over you, my master?—and you buried beneath your sheets like a corpse in its shroud?” It was Grandchamp’s rough voice, and so full of astonishment was he, that he dropped the glass of lemonade he was carrying, on to the floor. Getting no answer from his master he became more alarmed than ever and ran to draw back the sheets. Cinq-Mars’ face was flushed and he seemed asleep, but the old servant, thinking he was being stifled by a rush of blood to the head, seized on a jug of cold water and proceeded to souse him with it. This soldier’s remedy is seldom known to fail, and Cinq-Mars came to himself with a start.

“Why, Grandchamp, it’s you! Such dreadful dreams I’ve just been having!”

“*Peste*, monsieur! Your dreams are pretty enough anyway! I have just caught sight of the last of them vanishing. You have made an excellent choice!”

“What are you talking about, old idiot?”

“I am not an idiot, monsieur. I have sharp eyes still, and I have seen what I have seen. But in your state of illness, monsieur—I——”

“My good fellow, you are raving. Give me some thing to drink, for I am eaten up with thirst. Heavens! What a night! I can still see all those women!”

“All those women, monsieur? And how many might there be?”

“I’m talking of my dream, you old donkey! Can’t you give me something to drink, instead of standing there like a——”

“Very good, monsieur. I will go and ask for some more lemonade.” And going towards the door he shouted down the staircase, “Germian! Etienne! Louis!”

The innkeeper shouted up from below, “Coming, monsieur! Coming! They’re just helping me chase away the mad woman!”

“What mad woman?” asked Cinq-Mars, raising himself out of his bed.

The inn-keeper came into the room, and taking off his cotton cap, said with the utmost respect :

" It is nothing, M. le Marquis. A poor mad creature who came here this evening, barefoot, and whom we allowed to sleep in the room next you. But she has just escaped us and we haven't been able to catch her again."

" What ? " cried Cinq Mars, rubbing his eyes and once more gaining control of himself. " Then it wasn't a dream ? And my mother—and the Maréchal—Ah, but it was a dream—a horrible dream ! Get out, all of you ! " And he turned his face to the wall and lay down with the bed clothes pulled well over his head.

The astonished innkeeper tapped his forehead with his finger three times, expressing his belief to Grand-champ that the young man was in a parlous state ! The latter signed to him to leave the room quietly, and in order to watch near his young master the entire night, he installed himself in a huge arm chair covered with tapestry, where he sat squeezing lemons into a jug of water, with an air as profound as that of Archimedes himself, plunged in the depth of his scientific calculations.

CHAPTER VII

THE CABINET

LET us leave our young traveller fast asleep. Soon he will be peacefully pursuing his way again, but in the meantime we will take the opportunity of looking around us a little. And first we will stop at the city of Narbonne.

Near by, you will see the Mediterranean with blue waves beating on the golden sands. Make your way right into the town—so like an ancient town of Greece—follow up one dark and crooked little street, which will take you to the Archbishop's residence, and then, if you want to discover the powers-that-be, climb up the staircase and walk straight into the first and largest room you meet.

It is a long room lit by a series of narrow pointed windows, the upper row of which has still preserved its glass of blues and yellows and reds, colouring the atmosphere with strange mysterious lights. Below the tall chimney-piece is placed a large round table, covered with a chequered cloth, and littered over with papers and portfolios. Around it sit eight secretaries, bending, pen in hand, over the letters that are handed them to copy from a smaller table close at hand. Other men are standing by the bookshelves, arranging papers in their proper shelves in black-bound books that line the walls; their footsteps fall without a sound upon the thick carpet, and such is the silence in the room that the noise of a fly could be heard, beating its wings. The only audible sounds were the pens, rapidly scratching their way through the papers, and a shrill voice dictating, and stopping now and then to cough. The voice emanated from a large arm-chair with colossal arms, placed by the side of the fire-place in which, despite the warmth of the season, a fire was burning brightly. An old man sat in the chair, his large forehead fringed by snow-white hair, his eyes large and gentle looking, his face thin and pale, while the little white and pointed beard bestowed upon it that subtle air of distinction, to be found in almost all the portraits of that period. The mouth was almost devoid of lips—a feature which, we are obliged to admit, Lavater regards as a sign of indisputable wickedness. On either side of this thin line of a mouth, were a pair of grey moustaches cut according to the fashion of that period; on his head was a scarlet cap, while a long silk robe completely enveloped his body, from underneath which could be caught a glimpse of purple silk stockings. The figure was no less than Armand Duplessis, Cardinal de Richelieu.

Standing near him, gathered around the little table of which we have already spoken, were four youths from about fifteen to twenty. They were the pages of the household—a remnant of the feudal system that still survived in those days. The younger sons of the

nobility would receive wages from the great lords of the day, in return for their entire devotion under any circumstances, and were liable at any moment to be called upon to duel in their master's favour. These particular pages were occupied in scribbling down the letters for which they had been given the material, and after a brief survey by their chief, these were handed over to the secretaries to be copied afresh. The Cardinal Duke, meanwhile, was engaged in making secret notes, writing on his knee on little scraps of paper, which he inserted into nearly every one of the letters before they were finally sealed with his own hand.

He had been writing for some moments when, by means of a mirror placed exactly opposite his chair, he suddenly became aware of the youngest of his pages jotting down some lines on a piece of paper rather inferior to that used for official purposes; he would add a line from time to time, then slide it nimbly under the large sheet, which it was his painful duty to be filling. Being seated behind the Cardinal, he hoped that no one would observe these little lapses from the duty he seemed to be discharging with such care. All of a sudden he heard the Cardinal addressing him curtly.

"Monsieur Oliver! Come here!"

These two words were like a thunderbolt for the poor lad, who could not have been more than sixteen years old. He rose up quickly, and stood in front of the Cardinal, head bowed, and arms straight to his side.

The rest of the pages and secretaries took as much notice as soldiers do when one of their number is hit by a mortal bullet at their side. The event was nothing new to them, though it promised to be a bad case.

"What are you writing there?"

"Monseigneur—what Your Eminence was dictating to me——"

"What?"

"Monseigneur — the letter to Don Juan de Bragance——"

"No evasions, please monsieur. You were doing nothing of the kind."

"Monseigneur," blurted out the page with tears in his boy's eyes. "I—I was writing to one of my cousins——"

"Show it to me."

The youth trembled to such an extent that he was obliged to lean for support on the mantelpiece, as he faltered :

"I cannot."

"Monsieur le Vicomte, Oliver d'Entraigues," remarked the Cardinal, without betraying the slightest emotion. "You are dismissed from my service."

The page withdrew, knowing perfectly well there was nothing left to say. He slipped his letter into his pocket, and, opening the double doors just wide enough to slip through, he vanished like a bird escaping out of its cage.

The minister continued to scribble little notes upon his knee.

With renewed zest the secretaries resumed their work, and it was in a silence more intense than ever that folding doors were thrown back, and a monk was seen standing with arms crossed over his chest, apparently waiting to receive his orders. His face was dark, and slightly pitted with small-pox; mild-looking eyes that squinted somewhat beneath eyebrows that met in the middle; a mouth with a smile that was artful, malicious and sinister; a little beard slightly tinged with red, and a robe of the order of St. Francis, with sandals and bare feet, that the mere idea of walking on a carpet seemed to outrage.

Whoever he was, his appearance produced a considerable sensation in the room, for without waiting to finish either a sentence, a line or a word, each clerk rose to his feet and departed by the little door where the monk was still standing, some of them bowing as they went past him, others turning away their heads, while the younger pages pulled faces at him but took care to do so behind his back, for his presence seemed to fill them all with secret fear. As soon as they had all disappeared,

the monk entered the room with a profound bow, though, no sooner had the doors been closed, than he abandoned all ceremony, and took a seat near the Cardinal who, having acknowledged him by a slight and silent inclination of the head, fixed his eyes upon him as though waiting for intelligence. But on the Cardinal's face was the sort of frown that is produced by the sight of a spider or some creature equally repellent.

His companion, seeing it was expected of him to break the silence, did it with some abruptness :

" Well, monseigneur—and of what might you be thinking ? "

" Alas, Joseph, of what should any of us be thinking, such as we are, but of our future life in a better world than this ? For some days now I have been reflecting how human affairs have been all too much distracting me from this important theme, and how much I regret having spent my leisure moments in such mundane matters as the writing of my tragedies, ' Europe ' and ' Miriame '—notwithstanding the esteem in which they are held by all the choicest spirits of our age, and the glory that shall be mine hereafter."

Father Joseph, full of the news he was about to reveal, was somewhat taken aback by this unexpected preface, but he knew better than to betray the least signs of surprise, and immediately proceeded to adapt himself to his master's mood. " Where works of such outstanding merit are concerned," he replied, in a tone of profoundest regret, " France will indeed bewail her loss, should they prove the last of Your Eminence's pen."

" Maybe, my dear Joseph, but it is of no avail that such writers as Boisrobert, Corneille, and above all the celebrated Mairet, have proclaimed these tragedies the best within the memory of our tongue ; for I swear that I regard them as nothing but a mortal sin, and from henceforth my spare time is occupied solely with my ' Method of Controversy,' and my book on ' The Perfect Christian.' It is time I bear in mind that I am sixty-five years old, and the victim of a disease which knows no mercy."

"Calculations which your enemies know how to make the most of as well as does Your Eminence," retorted the monk, whom this conversation was beginning to irritate somewhat.

The Cardinal flushed red. "I know it, I know it," he murmured. "I am prepared for all things. But what have you to report to me?"

"We had already decided, monseigneur, that Mademoiselle d'Hautefort should be replaced as was Mademoiselle La Fayette. Well and good. But her place is not yet filled, and the King——"

"Well?"

The King has some ideas of an extremely novel nature."

"Indeed? And naturally ones that do not belong to me. Excellent," said Richelieu, in his usual sarcastic tones.

"It is not prudent, monsieur, to leave the favourite's place open for six whole days like this. Very far from it, if I may be allowed to say so."

"He has ideas, has he? Ideas?" repeated the Cardinal, with a sort of nervousness. "And what are—these ideas?"

"He talks of recalling the Queen Mother," answered the monk in a low voice. "Of sending for her from Cologne."

"Marie de Medicis!" exclaimed the Cardinal, striking the arm of his chair with all the force at his command. "Now, by the living God, not one step shall she take within this country! Did I not chase her from it with my own hands? England herself has not dared to receive her as an exile; Holland feared lest it should bring about her ruin; and now this very realm is thinking of opening its doors to her! No! A thousand times no! Such an idea could never have struck him of his own accord. To recall my enemy, his own mother—the treachery of it! He would never have dared to think of such a thing!"

He remained thinking a moment, then fixed a piercing look on the man opposite.

"In what terms has he expressed this wish of his? Tell me the exact words."

He has been heard to say, for all to hear, and in the presence of monsieur: "I believe that a Christian's first duty is to be a good son, and I shall not resist the dictates of my own conscience much longer."

"Christian! Conscience! Those are no words of his! exclaimed the Cardinal. "It is Father Caussin, his confessor, who has betrayed me! I will do away with this priest, Father Joseph—he is an enemy of the State, beyond all doubt! And I see now I have been acting too negligently these past few days! I must hasten the arrival of young d'Effiat, who I intend shall serve my purpose. They tell me he is an excellent young man in every way. Ah—how I reproach myself! 'Tis I who deserve to be punished for having left a Jesuitical fox like that at the King's elbow, without any secret instructions whatever, or security for his obedience to my orders! Fool that I am! Joseph, take a pen this moment, and write what I shall dictate to his successor, who shall be chosen with more care! I rather think that Father Sirmond——"

Father Joseph sat down at the large table, ready to write whatever the Cardinal should dictate—instructions concerning the government of the State, that would shortly afterwards be submitted to the King, who would receive them with all due respect, learning them by heart as though they were in very truth the Commandments of the Church. These writings still exist, as a terrifying proof of the absolute power a man can wield with sufficient force of boldness and intrigue:

- I. A Prince should appoint a Minister in Chief, which Minister should be endowed with three principal qualities
 1. To possess no other passion but that of the Prince, his Master.
 2. To be faithful and astute.
 3. To be in the service of the Church.
- II. A Prince should love his Minister in Chief without reservation.

- III. Should never change his Minister in Chief.
- IV. Should tell him all things.
- V. Should give him free access to his person.
- VI. Should give him sovereign authority over the people.
- VII. Much honour and estate.
- VIII. A Prince has no greater treasure than his Minister in Chief.
- IX. A Prince should believe nothing that is said against his Minister in Chief, neither should he take pleasure in hearing ill report of him.
- X. A Prince should confide to his Minister in Chief everything that is said against him—*even when a pledge of secrecy has been exacted from the said Prince.*
- XI. A Prince should prefer not only the good of his State, but also the welfare of his Minister in Chief, to that of all his relatives.

Such were the commands of the God of France, made all the more astounding by the terrible simplicity with which he bequeathed them to posterity, as though they too should pin their faith upon him.

Whilst he was dictating these notes, reading them from a little paper in his hand, an increasing sadness seemed to get the better of his mind; and no sooner had he finished, than he sank back into his chair, his arms crossed, and his head bowed upon his breast.

Father Joseph ceased writing and approached to ask him if he were not ill. Whereupon these were the words he heard:

“Vanity, vanity, nothing but vanity! Everywhere perpetual discord and unrest! An ambitious man could he but see me now would flee into the desert! For what is power such as mine? Miserable reflected glory of a King, with all the ceaseless fret of trying to hitch it to one's own peculiar star! To rule a man for twenty years and find him still a stranger! Escape me he dare not, but avoid me he may and does, slipping through my fingers at every turn! What could I not have done with his hereditary powers? Whereas,

now . . . all these calculations just to maintain the balance of affairs . . . no genius left for any real enterprise . . . suspended by one trembling hair . . . with Europe in the hollow of my hand ! What purpose in these international card tricks when all my own interests are confined within four walls ? Harder far to control the six square feet around a monarch than to rule the earth from end to end. Such it is to be Minister in Chief ! And yet men envy me ! ”

His features were distorted in the most alarming fashion, and he was now seized with a violent attack of coughing, ending in a slight spitting of blood. Noticing that Father Joseph, now thoroughly alarmed, was about to ring a little golden bell that stood upon the table, the Cardinal stopped him, and suddenly rising to his feet, with all the energy of a young man, cried out :

“ It is nothing, Joseph ! Sometimes I get these fits of discouragement, but they are short, and leave me stronger than they found me. As for my health, it is neither better nor worse. We will not talk of that. What have you been doing in Paris ? I have been pleased at the King’s coming to Béarn. We can watch over him better from there. With what bait did you persuade him ? ”

“ A battle at Perpignan.”

“ Not a bad notion either. At least we can arrange one. ‘Tis as good as anything else for the moment. But the young Queen . . . the young Queen . . . what did she have to say about it ? ”

“ She is furious with you. Her correspondence has revealed the questions to which you have submitted her ! ”

“ Bah ! A little submission and a few sonnets will soon make her forget that I have separated her from her house of Austria, as well as the country of her beloved Buckingham. How does she occupy her time ? ”

“ By intriguing with Monsieur. But—since this is a strictly private interview, here are my reports from day to day.”

“ I shall not trouble to read them ; so long as the Duc

de Bouillon is in Italy, I have nothing to fear from that quarter ; she can amuse herself by making little plots with Gaston in the chimney corner. He never perpetrates anything but little feeble sallies outside the kingdom ; he can make another if it entertains him. The Comte de Soissons wasn't worth the bullet you put into his head either. The poor man had no more energy left in him."

Here the Cardinal sat down in his chair again and began to laugh with amazing gaiety for a Chief Minister of State.

" I shall never get over that expedition of theirs into Amiens ! There they both got hold of me, each of them with five hundred gentlemen all armed to the teeth, and everything ready for my banishment—just like Concini ! But the great Vitry wasn't there this time, and they allowed me to talk to them by the hour, of the hunt and the Saint's Day ; and all the time not one of them dared make any sign to all those cut-throats to get about their business ! And we knew ourselves that they had been waiting for this moment for two whole months ! While I, of course, noticed nothing that was going on ; unless it was that little scoundrel of an Abbé Gondi, who kept circling around my person, obviously looking as though he had something hidden up his sleeve. It was he who finally got me into my coach ! "

" Speaking of the Abbé, monseigneur, the Queen has a great desire to make him Coadjuteur."

" Then she is mad ! He's just the man to be her undoing ! He's a musketeer gone wrong, the devil in a priestly cloak ! Read his *History of Fiesque*, and you will see for yourself. He'll receive no promotion as long as I live ! "

" Indeed ? And yet you have sent for another ambitious young man of the same age ? "

" But with a difference ! He's a puppet, my friend, a mere puppet, this young Cinq-Mars. He won't think of anything but his pay, and the cut of his uniform. His pretty face tells me all I want to know about him, and

he will be weak and amenable enough. That is why I preferred him to his elder brother. He will do everything we want."

"Ah, monseigneur," replied the monk doubtfully, "I never believe in trusting these people who look so calm outwardly. The flame that burns within them is often the more dangerous. Remember his father, the Maréchal d'Effiat."

"But this is only a boy, and I shall bring him up in the way he should go; whereas Gondi is a confirmed rebel, and a dare-devil that nothing will stop; already he has dared to dispute Madame de la Meilleraie with me! Were you aware of that? A little petty priest, with no other attractions than his eternal chatter and his cavalier manners! But I am happy to say the husband has taken good care to dispose of him."

Father Joseph, who appreciated his master no more when he related these episodes than when he recited his verses, made a grimace that was meant to be subtle, but was nothing more than ugly and awkward: that monkey-like twist to his mouth was intended to indicate: "Ah! Who could possibly resist Monseigneur!" But his master's interpretation of it was: "I am a vulgar fellow, and know nothing about these matters of the great world," and without further comment, he picked up a despatch lying on his table, and proceeded:

"The Duke of Rohan is dead. That's good news. That means the end of the Huguenots. He was a lucky man. At the Parliament of Toulouse I condemned him to be drawn in pieces by four horses, instead of which he dies quietly on the field of battle at Rheinfeld. What matter? The result is the same. An important man is no more! How they are falling, one by one, since Montmorency! Scarcely one left now that does not bow before me. Almost all our dupes of Versailles have been punished. No-one can reproach me with lack of retaliation! I treat them but as they would have treated me, at the instigation of the Queen mother! That old dotard, Bassompierre, has got off with perpetual

imprisonment, as well as Maréchal Vitry's assassin, for that is the fate which they would reserve for me ! A curious thing how all these blind men believe themselves free to plot and plan, and never see how they can but dangle on the end of the strings I hold in my hand, occasionally lengthened, just to give them more air and room for exercise ! And have the Huguenots wept their fill for the loss of their dear Duke ? ”

“ All has gone well, except for this affair at Loudon. And that, too, ended happily.”

“ What ? ‘ Happily ’ you say ? I trust that Grandier is dead ? ”

“ Yes. That is what I meant. Your Eminence has every reason to be satisfied ; everything was over within twenty-four hours, and by now it is forgotten. Laubardemont committed a slight blunder in making the trial public, and it was that which caused the trouble. But we have the description of the agitators, and we are on their tracks.”

“ Good. Very good indeed. Urbain was too superior a man to be left where he was in peace ; he had marked leanings towards Protestantism, and I have reason to believe he would soon have left the fold of the Church. His writings against the celibacy of the priesthood were sufficient cause for doubt ; and whenever there is doubt—take this to heart, Joseph—it is better to cut the tree down at the roots, before the fruit has fallen. For remember that these Huguenots are a veritable republic within the State ; once let them get the upper hand in France, and the monarchy's days are numbered ; they would establish whatever government of their own that seemed likely to last the longest.”

“ And the terrible grief they cause from day to day to Our Holy Father the Pope ! ” observed Joseph.

“ Ah ! ” exclaimed the Cardinal, “ I see your point. You want to remind me of the Pope's obstinacy in withholding from you the cardinal's hat. Be at rest ; I mean to mention it this very day to the new Ambassador we are sending over there. And on his

arrival the Maréchal d'Estrées will culminate our joint labours of the past two years in your nomination. Already I am beginning to think how well you will look in the purple—an admirable colour for the concealing of blood-stains ! ”

And the two men began to laugh—one as the master who heaps insult upon his own hired assassin, and the other as the slave, resigned to any form of humiliation which tends to his advancement.

This laughter caused by the sanguinary joke of the old minister was still at its height when the door opened, and a page announced the simultaneous arrival of several messengers from various parts. Father Joseph immediately rose, and standing with his back against the wall—for all the world like an Egyptian mummy—assumed an expression of inward contemplation. One by one twelve messengers came in, clad in divers disguises ; one as a Swiss soldier ; one as a sutler ; a third a master mason. They had entered the Palace through a stairway and secret passages, and they left the room by a different door from the one they came in at, so that not one of them encountered his brother spies. Each man deposited a roll of papers on the big table, spoke for a brief moment to the Cardinal in the shadow of the bay window, and then took his leave. Richelieu, who had risen abruptly at the first man's appearance, attended to everything most carefully himself, receiving them, listening to them, and shutting the door upon them with his own hand. He signed to Father Joseph when the last man had gone, and without a word they gathered round the table, undoing, or rather tearing open, the packets of despatches, the contents of which were hurriedly read aloud.

“ The Duke of Weimar is following up his advantages ; Duke Charles is beaten. The spirit of our general is all that we could desire. He brings us good news. I am pleased.”

“ Monseigneur, the Duke of Turenne has retaken the towns in Lorraine. This is what he says——”

“ Ah, leave that for now . . . it's of no account.

He's a good and honest man, quite unfitted for politics ; all he wants is a little army to play at soldiers with—never mind whom he fights against. We shall always be the best of friends."

"The Long Parliament still continues to rule in England. The Commons are pursuing their own policy ; there are massacres in Ireland ; the Earl of Strafford is condemned to death."

"To death ! Terrible !"

"This is what they say : ' His Majesty King Charles I. has not had the courage to sign the warrant of arrest, but has deputed four commissioners'"

"Weakest of monarchs, I give you up for lost ! You are no longer worth our money ! Since thou art ungrateful thou must perish ! Unhappy Wentworth !"

And a tear glistened in Richelieu's eye. This man, accustomed to play fast and loose with the lives of others, bewailed the lot of a minister abandoned by his sovereign. It was the similarity between his situation and his own that really struck him, and his own lot that he deplored. He ceased to read his despatches out loud, and his companion did likewise. With the utmost attention he scrutinised all these private reports of the most minute and secret circumstances concerning anyone the least important, for his spies were clever men who knew their work. These secret reports were attached to the Royal dispatches, but all had first to pass through the Cardinal's hands, to be carefully sifted and served up to his master in the most desirable form. The special notes were all carefully burnt by Father Joseph as soon as digested by Richelieu. But the latter seemed far from satisfied ; he was walking swiftly up and down the room with restless gestures, when the door opened, and a thirteenth messenger appeared. He was a boy, apparently not more than fourteen years of age ; under his arm was a packet, sealed with black, and addressed to the King, and all that he handed to the Cardinal was a little note of which Joseph's sly look could only intercept four words or so. The Duke started, tore it into a thousand

pieces, and stooping down to whisper into the lad's ear, spoke to him for some time without receiving any answer. All that the monk could hear was the Cardinal's words as he dismissed him: "Be careful, now! Not before two o'clock."

"And now, Joseph, it's time to take our leave," said His Eminence, returning once more to the table. "Open the doors, and admit all those who want to pay their court to me. And then we will go and visit His Majesty at Perpignan. I think I have something this time that will make him listen to me."

The Capucin withdrew, and the pages opened the large double doors and announced in rotation all those grand lords of the period who had obtained permission from the King to leave him and pay their respects to the Cardinal; some even, under pretext of ill-health, or urgent affairs, had departed without his knowledge, so as not to be the last at the ceremony, and the melancholy monarch found himself almost completely deserted, in a way that is reserved for most sovereigns at their death-bed. And, in truth, his royal throne might well be called by such a name, his reign being one continual agony, and his Minister-in-Chief the most menacing of successors.

Two pages, from the best families of France, stood on either side of the doorway, while the ushers announced the names of the visitors, who had already encountered Father Joseph in the previous room. The Cardinal remained seated, making a slight inclination of the head to the most distinguished courtiers, while for nothing short of a Prince would he half rise, with the help of the two arms of his chair. Each cavalier having made his bow, remained standing in front of him, close to the chimney-piece, listening to his few words of greeting; then, at a sign from him, would finish his tour around the room, departing by the same door through which he had entered, remaining there the space of a few moments to salute Father Joseph (who imitated his master to such an extent that he had already been nicknamed "The

Gray Cardinal,") and finally leaving the palace ; unless a signal mark of favour had been bestowed upon him, in which case he installed himself behind His Eminence's chair.

Several persons—not wholly devoid of merit, and therefore unsuitable tools—were allowed to pass by unnoticed, and the first comer to be detained was the Maréchal d'Estrées, on the verge of his departure to the Roman Embassy. A pause amongst those immediately behind him, conveyed to the rest of the room beyond that some conversation was afoot, whereupon Father Joseph appeared with a significant look at His Eminence, as much as to say : " Remember the promise you have just made me "—and received a reassuring glance in return. At the same time the crafty monk intimated to his master that the figure he held by the arm was one of his victims, about to be converted into a docile instrument. This was a young man, wearing a short green cloak, and a vest of the same colour, together with tight-fitting red breeches, with diamond-studded garters round his knees—the livery of Monsieur's pages. Father Joseph's talk to him was confidential, but by no means in the interests of his master, for his one obsession was the Cardinal's hat, and he was preparing other strings to his bow, should the Chief Minister's word have failed him.

" Tell Monsieur he should never judge by appearances, and that a more faithful servant than myself does not exist. The Cardinal begins to fail, and I consider it my duty to reveal his weak spots to one who should inherit sovereign power during the minority. To give your gracious Prince a proof of my good faith, inform him from me, that Puy-Laurens, his friend, is on the eve of being arrested, and unless he shelters him, the Cardinal will place him in the Bastille."

While the servant was thus betraying his master, the master was similarly occupied in circumventing the servant. His own self-respect, together with a certain reverence for things ecclesiastical, was revolted by the idea of seeing this most disreputable of all agents wearing

the same hat as constituted his own outward claim to glory ; seated, moreover, on the same level, which might prove but a stepping stone to higher things. And so he was softly murmuring to the Maréchal d'Estrées :

" I know of nothing that should cool the affection towards us of our Holy Father. What have we ever achieved, save for the glory of our holy Mother Church ? It was I in person who celebrated the first Mass at la Rochelle, and you yourself, my dear Maréchal, will be the first to admit that the Church's holy garb is to be found everywhere, your own troops not excluded. Cardinal de la Valette has just gained a glorious victory, I understand, in the Palatinate."

" And just effected a masterly retreat," replied the Maréchal, with a slight emphasis on the last word.

The minister ignored this little outburst of professional jealousy, and continued in his even voice :

" The Almighty has shown that He does not scorn to inform His Levites with the spirit of victory, since the Duke of Weimar was no more instrumental in the conquest of Lorraine than this pious cardinal, and never has a naval engagement been better conducted than by the Archbishop of Bordeaux at la Rochelle."

Whereat the Maréchal grimly retorted :

" Of a truth, Monseigneur, nobody can say that it was by sea he was beaten."

Whereon the Cardinal could not repress a smile ; but seeing that its electric result was to reproduce other smiles all around the room, as well as whisperings and conjectures, he immediately resumed the utmost gravity, and taking the Maréchal's arm in a friendly manner, continued :

" Come, come, M. l'Ambassadeur, you have a ready tongue for repartee. Like you, I have no fear of the Cardinal Albornos, nor all the Borgias in the world, nor all the efforts of the Spaniards against our Holy Father."

Then, raising his voice for all to hear, he cried :

" M. d'Estrées, pray remain where you are, close to our chair. We still have much to say to you, and you are

welcome to overhear all our conversations, our policy being open as the light of day, and our sole concern the interests of His Majesty, and the welfare of the State."

The Maréchal bowed low, and took up his position behind the Cardinal's chair, thereby making room for the Cardinal of Valetta, who, for all his obsequious protestations, received only a few vague words and irrelevant remarks, during which Richelieu never ceased glancing towards the door to observe the next arrival. Finally, he cut short the most flattering of his guest's remarks by an abrupt exclamation :

"Ah, so it's you, my dear Fabert ! Just the man with whom I have been longing to discuss the siege."

The General saluted the Cardinal Generalissimo somewhat awkwardly, and proceeded to present various officers who had come with him from the camp. For some little time they discussed the military situation, Richelieu adopting a propitiatory attitude, as a preface to giving his own orders later, on the field of battle itself. He addressed all the officers by name, and questioned each one of them about the camp arrangements.

At this point arrived the Duc d'Angoulême, before whom all gave way, for he was a member of the House of Valois, who had bitterly opposed King Henry IV., and was now prostrating himself at the Cardinal's feet. At the moment, he was soliciting some military preferment, and at his heels walked Mazarin, still young, but already subtle and insinuating, and completely confident of his career.

After them came the Duc d'Halluin, whose flow of complimentary language was stayed by the Cardinal's audible remark :

"Monsieur le Duc, I have the honour to inform you that the King has created a Marshalship of France on your behalf. You will henceforth be known as Schomberg, will you not ? That, at least, is the desire of the town of Leucate, that owes its deliverance to you. But—pardon me—here comes M. de Montauron, with a piece of important information."

"No, monseigneur, I only wanted to report to you that the poor young author whom you are good enough to consider in your service is on the brink of starvation."

"Indeed? And do you consider this a proper moment to choose to speak to me of these trifles? And, in any case, that miserable little Corneille will never do anything of importance. Up to now he has only given us *Le Cid* and *Les Horaces*. Let the lad work, and work again. I know he is one of my adherents. So much the worse for me. However, since you seem to take the matter so much to heart, you can let him have 500 crowns out of my private cash box."

The Treasurer withdrew, charmed with the liberality of his master, for which, in due course, was received the dedication for "*Cinna*," in which the great Corneille compares the Cardinal's soul to that of Augustus, and thanks him for having bestowed charity upon the Muses.

Richelieu, annoyed by this importunity, now got up, saying it was getting late, and the time was drawing near for his visit to His Majesty.

The noble lords were just preparing to escort him on his way, when a man advanced towards the Cardinal, clad in the gown of an Inquisitor. The confidence of his smile was such as to astonish all beholders, implying, as it did: "You and I know what we know; we understand one another; in the privacy of your study who more intimate than I?" None the less, his clumsy and awkward bearing betrayed the lowness of his origin. It was Laubardemont.

With a fierce frown at this apparition, Richelieu glanced daggers at Joseph, and turned towards his guests with the exclamation: "How do these scoundrels creep into our presence?" After which, he turned his back upon Laubardemont, now redder than the Cardinal's robe, and preceded by his crowd of sycophants, descended the grand staircase of the Archbishop's residence.

The Chief Minister entered the litter that was waiting outside to carry him towards Perpignan, his state of health not allowing him to ride on horseback or travel

by coach. This species of "travelling room" contained a bed, a table, and a little chair for the page who would sit and read to him, or write from his dictation. The whole apparatus was covered with purple damask, and borne along by eighteen men, chosen from his guards, who relieved one another at stated intervals, and, whatever the weather, were forced to march bare-headed, be it cold or wet. On either side of the windows rode all the most distinguished nobles and officers of the army. The Cardinal of Valetta and Mazarin were among the most assiduous of his attendants, as well as Chavigny and the Maréchal de Vitry, who was said to be doing his utmost to avoid a dose of the Bastille.

Next came two coaches containing the Cardinal's secretaries, his doctors and confessor; then eight carriages and four horses for the gentlemen of his household; twenty-four mules to carry his baggage, escorted by two hundred musketeers on foot, while his own regiment of guards, all men of high birth, rode before and behind the entire procession, magnificently mounted.

Such was the manner in which the Chief Minister made his entry into Perpignan a few days later. The size of the litter had several times made it necessary to widen the roads and pull down the walls of some of the smaller villages, too narrow to admit of its passage, and the whole journey (as stated by the writers of the period with evident admiration) resembled the triumphal progress of a conquering hero. We have searched everywhere for some record of the owners of property thus destroyed for this auspicious event, that should contain expressions of this same delighted awe, but so far without success.

CHAPTER VIII

THE AUDIENCE

THE Cardinal and his suite had halted at the entrance to the camp; the troops were arrayed in perfect order, and to the sound of cannon and marshal music the

litter was carried past serried ranks of cavalry and infantry, extending from the first tent to that of the Minister himself, placed at some little distance from the royal standard, and easily distinguished from afar by its purple hue. The colonel of each regiment received some word or sign of recognition from the Cardinal, who, having dismissed his followers, entered his tent, there to remain in seclusion until the hour of the royal visit. Meanwhile, the members of his escort waited in the long passage ways, covered with striped awning, that led, like so many galleries, to the Royal Presence. There the courtiers met and mingled, gathered together in little knots, and regarding new-comers with affability or scorn, according to the party they represented. Much whispering prevailed, and varied signs of astonishment, pleasurable and otherwise, as though in anticipation of events about to happen. One curious conversation, among many others, occurred in a corner of the principal gallery.

"And may I inquire, Monsieur l'Abbé, the reason for these insufferable glances you are pleased to send in my direction?"

"*Parblieu*, M. de Launay—simply that I am curious to behold your next move! Since this visit of yours into Touraine, all the world has been forsaking your Cardinal Duke. If you don't believe it, just go and talk for a few moments to Her Majesty's people, or those of Monsieur. And, by the way, you are ten minutes late by the clock of the Cardinal de Valetta, who has just been shaking hands with Rochepot, and the supporters of the late Comte de Soissons, whose untimely loss I shall bewail my whole life long, for the rest of my natural existence."

"Very good, M. de Gondi, I quite understand your meaning. You are good enough to honour me with a challenge.

"Correct, M. le Comte," replied the youthful cleric, saluting with all the formality the occasion demanded. "I was waiting for the opportunity to call you out

on behalf of my friend M. d'Attichi, with whom you had a little affair in Paris."

"I am entirely at your service, M. l'Abbé. If you will see to procuring your seconds, I will go and find mine."

"On horseback, is it not, with both sword and pistol?" Gondi spoke with much the same air with which he would arrange a picnic into the country, at the same time fastidiously dusting the sleeves of his coat with his fingers.

"If that is your wish," replied the other.

And for the time being they separated, with profound salutations on both sides.

The gallery was now thronged with a brilliant crowd of young men of all sorts, seeking for their own particular friends. They were dressed with all the elaborate care required by the etiquette of the Court: little short cloaks of every conceivable colour, in velvet or satin, embroidered with gold or silver; the order of St. Michael, or of the Holy Ghost; ruffles and feathers of every description; variegated shoulder-knots and swords hung from long chains, the glitter of which was only surpassed by the fiery looks of their swash-buckling owners, with their quick repartee and bursts of uproarious laughter. And in the midst of this animated throng, graver men were seen to pass, eminent nobles, followed by their innumerable retinue.

Through this medley of people prowled the diminutive Abbé of Gondi, fiercely frowning, and twirling the little moustaches affected by the churchmen of his day. His little screwed-up eyes searched eagerly for any of his friends, and finally he accosted a tall young man clad all in black from head to foot, even the scabbard of his sword being of the deepest bronze. He was chatting to a Captain of the Guards, when the Abbé drew him on one side, with the words:

"Monsieur de Thou, one hour from now I shall need your services as a second, mounted, with sword and pistol—if you will be good enough to grant me this honour."

"Of course, monsieur—you know I am always and entirely at your service. Where is the place appointed?"

“ Before the Spanish fortress, if that meets with your approval.”

“ Forgive me if, for the time being, I return to this exceedingly interesting conversation. You may count on me. I shall be there to the minute.”

And de Thou left him and went back to his Captain, all this having been spoken by him quite calmly, in the gentlest of voices, even with a certain absence of mind.

The little priest having shaken him effusively by the hand, continued his voyage of discovery.

“ Hallo, my little son of the Church, and what may you be seeking? Another second, I’ll be bound ! ” It was the Duc de Beaufort addressing him.

“ And I would lay a pretty wager,” added M. de la Rochefoucauld, “ that it is against one of the Cardinal Duke’s men.”

“ Both right, gentlemen. But since when have you been pleased to make merry over affairs of honour ? ”

“ Now Heaven forbid ! ” replied M. de Beaufort. “ We men of the sword know well enough how to pay reverence to tierce, quarte and octave—though I don’t pretend to have much knowledge where clerical attire is concerned.”

“ At least you are aware, gentlemen, that it serves as no handicap to a good swordsman, and that I am willing to prove it to all the world’s satisfaction. And I ask nothing better than to cast this priest’s frock to the dogs.”

“ I suppose that is the reason you are always having it so elaborately frayed in duels,” replied M. de Rochefoucauld. “ But at least, remember my dear Abbé, that it is you who are beneath it ! ”

Whereupon Gondi turned his back upon them, glancing at the clock, and loth to lose more time in indifferent jokes ; but he met with no better success elsewhere, for having encountered two gentlemen in the service of the young Queen, whom he supposed would therefore be at variance with the Cardinal, and delighted accordingly

to measure blades with his supporters, one of them accosted him with the utmost gravity with the words :

" Monsieur Gondi, you know what has happened, of course ? The King has declared for all the world to hear—' Whether our imperious Cardinal desires it or no, the widow of the Great Henry shall remain in exile no longer ! Imperious ! That's tantamount to a complete disgrace ! Of a truth, nobody will dare to be found speaking to him now, and he will most certainly depart from the Court before the day is over.

" So I have heard, Monsieur . . . but I have a little affair on hand . . . "

" It is fortunate for you that his downfall comes in the midst of your career like this . . . "

" I was referring to an affair of honour . . . "

" Whereas Mazarin is entirely on your side . . . "

" Will you listen to me, or not ? "

" And if he is on your side, he'll have a good memory for all your little adventures—that fine duel of yours with M. de Coutenana, and that affair over the little milliner ; I understand he has already spoken about it to the King. Good-bye for the present, my dear Abbé, we are extremely pressed for time. Good-bye . . . good-bye . . . "

And, linking arms with his friend, the young gallant took his departure, without listening to another word, and was soon lost among the crowd in the gallery.

So there the Abbé stood, filled with mortification at his inability to discover a second, and sadly contemplating the time and the passers-by. All of a sudden he noticed a young man whose face he did not know, seated at a table in the most dejected attitude. He wore black clothes of mourning, distinguished by no mark of attachment to any particular house, or regiment, and was apparently waiting with much impatience for the moment the King should appear, while vaguely regarding those around him with the air of a man in a strange world.

Gondi immediately advanced towards him.

"*Ma foi*, Monsieur," said he, "I have not the honour of your acquaintance; but a fencing party never comes amiss to a young gentleman of breeding; and if you should desire to appear as my second, a quarter of an hour will find us at the appointed place. I am Paul de Gondi, and I have called out M. de Launay, a member of the Cardinal's party, but in all other respects a very gallant man."

The stranger, without showing the least sign of astonishment at being addressed in this manner, merely inquired, without raising his head:

"And who are his seconds?"

"*Ma foi*, I haven't the slightest idea. But what does that matter to you? A scratch of the rapier among good friends is no very serious affair."

With a smile of indifference the stranger passed his hands through his long chestnut locks, while, with a look at the large watch which hung suspended from his belt, he replied:

"Very good, monsieur. Since I have no friends here whatsoever, and nothing better to do, I will follow you. I would as lief do that as anything else."

And, taking his large black-plumed hat from the table, he proceeded to follow the pugnacious little Abbé, who scuttled along in front of him, perpetually darting back to hasten the other's footsteps, like a child scampering in front of its father, or a high-spirited dog, that skips thither and back again twenty times before it reaches its journey's end.

But now two ushers, dressed in the royal livery, drew aside the large curtains that divided the gallery from the royal tent, and silence reigned at last. One by one the courtiers filed slowly through the narrow passage, and there, before a little table surrounded by gilt chairs, stood the monarch, Louis XIII., together with all the chief Officers of the Crown. He was most sumptuously apparelled, in a surcoat of chamois colour, with open sleeves, ornamented with blue ribbons and shoulder knots, reaching down to his waist. His large trunk

hose ended at the knees, all striped with gold and red, and trimmed at the edge with knots of ribbon, also blue. His riding boots, reaching only a few inches above the ankles, were lined with a profusion of lace in such quantities that it seemed almost to grow out of them like flowers out of a pot. A short cloak of blue velvet, embroidered with the Cross of the Holy Ghost, hung on the King's left arm, while his left hand grasped the pommel of his sword.

His head was bare, and his pallid and distinguished face clearly illuminated by the rays of the sun filtering through the ceiling of the tent. His thin cast of countenance, with its melancholy expression, was accentuated by the little pointed beard of the period; the classic profile, and aquiline nose, all spoke of his descent from the House of Bourbon, though the Bourbon look of penetration was sadly lacking; his eyes seemed inflamed by weeping and sleepless nights, while the vague uncertainty upon his face gave it an appearance touched with wildness.

At the moment, he was apparently listening with grave attention to a little knot of men gathered around him, standing first on one foot, then on the other—a family trick of the Bourbons. These were the enemies of the Cardinal who every moment was expected to make his appearance. The King spoke rapidly, occasionally pausing to make some courteous gesture of acknowledgment to his bowing courtiers as they passed on their way before him.

Two hours had passed in this manner, and still the Cardinal had not arrived; the Court was gathered around its Sovereign, and overflowing into the galleries behind, and the names of the visitors were now beginning to be announced at rarer intervals.

"And are we not going to see our cousin, the Cardinal, to-day?" inquired the King from M. Montrésor, one of the supporters of Monsieur. His tone was encouraging, and he paused for the reply.

"Sire, he is reported to be extremely ill at the moment."

"And of a sickness that only Your Majesty can cure," remarked the Duc de Beaufort.

"We only touch for the King's Evil," was the monarch's reply, "and the Cardinal's complaints are so mysterious that we do not pretend to understand them."

Thus the unhappy King endeavoured to brave his Minister at a distance, resorting to jokes and facetious remarks the better to break this insupportable yoke, so difficult to cast aside. And for a moment he almost believed he had succeeded, and renewed his strength in the gratified glances of the nobles that surrounded him. But an inward voice whispered in his ear that once this hour was over, the heavy burden would fall on him again, and in order to stifle this growing sense of his own inability to reign, he began to chatter feverishly.

"We shall not be long now, taking Perpignan," he called across to Fabert, who was a little distance away, while to Valette he added: "And Lorraine, too, Cardinal. Lorraine will soon be ours." And, turning to Mazarin, and touching him on the arm, he added: "Not such a difficult task, after all, Monsieur, to regulate a nation's affairs?"

The Italian, not wholly sharing the confidence of the Court with regard to the Cardinal's downfall, replied warily:

"Ah, Sire! These successes, both at home and abroad, only serve to show Your Majesty's genius for selecting the right instruments whereby to govern . . ."

But the Duc de Beaufort, interrupting with that assurance of manner and confident voice which had already earned him the nickname of "Mr. Importance," cried aloud, over his head:

"*Pardieu*, Sire, it is only a matter of willing! A nation is a thing to be ridden like a horse, with spurs and a bridle; and as we are all good cavaliers, at your service, all you have to do is to make your choice!"

This coxcomb's utterance had no time to produce its effect, for two ushers now cried out with one breath:

"His Eminence! The Cardinal Duke!"

The King flushed like a boy caught in a misdemeanour; but collecting himself almost immediately, he adopted an air of haughty resolution that was not lost upon his Minister.

The latter, clad with all the ceremony of his ecclesiastical robes, leaning upon two young pages, and followed by his Captain of the Guards, together with five hundred gentlemen devoted to his service, advanced slowly into the presence, stopping at every step, apparently in pain, though his real motive was the observation of the faces which surrounded him. One glance was sufficient.

His own party remained at the entrance to the royal tent, and among its present occupants, not one saluted him or dared so much as look him in the face; Valette pretended to be deep in a conversation with Montrésor, while the King, determined on a cold reception, made a feint of saluting him slightly, and then continued to talk confidentially with the Duc de Beaufort.

The Cardinal was therefore obliged, having paid his homage, to continue on his way, apparently desirous of mingling with the throng; but his real purpose was to test their minds still further. One by one they melted away from him as at the presence of a leper; Fabert alone approached him, with that fresh brusque air he always wore, interspersing his conversation with his customary soldier's jargon:

"Upon my faith, Monseigneur, I feel I owe you an apology. Here you go, making a breach in our defences, like any cannon ball!"

"While you stand up to me as though to the enemy himself!" retorted the Cardinal Duke. "Believe me, my dear Fabert, you shall have no cause to regret it."

Mazarin now drew near, with the utmost precaution, and adopting an air of the profoundest melancholy, bowed low to the Cardinal in such a way that his back was turned to the King's party, who would interpret his actions only as the salutations bestowed upon a fallen rival—taking good care, none the less, that the Duke

should recognise them as marks of respect, mingled with regret that was both discreet and silent.

The Minister remained perfectly calm, and smiling his disdainful smile, while adopting that purposeful expression and air of grandeur that never failed him in moments such as these, leant once again upon his pages, and without waiting for a word or sign from his Sovereign, directed his course towards him, retracing his steps the full length of the tent. Despite the courtiers' efforts to conceal the fact, all faces were turned in his direction, and even those engaged in conversation with His Majesty paused breathlessly, in expectation of what would happen next.

Louis XIII., his presence of mind now entirely transformed into astonishment, remained motionless, with that icy look upon his face that formed his sole remaining strength ; a force of inertia which, where monarchs are concerned, carries its own peculiar weight.

Once in front of Louis, the Cardinal did not bow, but with eyes cast down, and his two hands leaning heavily on the pages beneath them, said :

"Sire, I have come hither to intreat Your Majesty to accord me the favour of that retreat my soul has so long desired. My health is failing me ; I feel that my course of life is almost run ; Eternity is drawing near, and before I render my account to the King of Heaven, I would wish to do so to my earthly Sovereign. Eighteen years ago, Sire, you entrusted to me the government of a kingdom at variance within itself ; I give it back to you restored and whole. Your enemies are crushed and humiliated. My task is achieved. And now I crave permission of Your Majesty to retire to Citeaux, of which place I am Abbé General, there to complete my days in prayers and meditation."

The King, displeased at the haughty tone of some of these words, showed none of the signs of weakness that the Cardinal expected, and that up to now he had always seen whenever he threatened to resign his office. On the contrary, aware that the eyes of the entire Court were

fixed upon him, he regarded his minister in his most kindly manner as he replied

"We thank you for your services, Monsieur le Cardinal, and grant you the repose of which you stand so much in need."

Richelieu was stirred to the depths of his being, but more especially with wrath, of which he allowed no sign to escape him. "The same indifference," he reflected within himself, "with which you allowed Montmorency to meet his end. But you shall not escape me in this way." Whereupon he bowed and spoke again:

"The only favour I solicit for my services is Your Majesty's gracious acceptance of a gift from my hands, in the shape of my Cardinal's Palace, built in Paris at my own expense."

The King, completely taken by surprise, made a sign of assent, while an astonished murmur arose among the onlookers.

"I also throw myself at Your Majesty's feet, and beg you of your clemency to rescind a measure of my own enacting—I admit it for all to hear—at a time when, being of the world worldly, I was apt to relax my stringent principle of devotion to the public weal. Now that the lamp of solitude is about to shed its rays upon me, I realise my error and repent."

Attention now became more strained than ever, and the King's uneasiness visibly increased.

"There is someone, Sire, who has ever been dear to me, despite her wrongs towards your person, and the distance which, in the interests of your welfare, I was forced to place between you: someone to whom I am infinitely indebted, and whom you, too, should love, despite her endeavours to raise armed forces for your detriment. I refer to Queen Marie de Medici, your mother, whom I herewith implore you to recall out of her exile."

A cry of astonishment escaped from the King at hearing this unexpected name, while momentary dismay was seen on the faces of all around. In silence they

waited for the royal reply. For a long time Louis XIII. stood regarding his old minister with a gaze now pregnant with a nation's destiny. In one moment all the indefatigable services of Richelieu were crowding in upon his mind, his unbounded devotion, his incomparable gifts, and the thought of ever having wished to part from such a servant, filled him with amazement; he was profoundly touched, moreover, by this last request, which wrested from his hands the one weapon he could really use against him. The love of a son towards his mother soon brought the words of pardon to his lips, and in his happiness at granting this desire of his heart, he extended his hand to the Cardinal with a characteristic Bourbon gesture of nobleness and generosity. The Cardinal bowed low, and kissed it with the utmost respect, his heart filled, not with repentance, but with triumphant pride.

The King, now moved beyond all measure, turned towards his courtiers and announced :

“ We are frequently apt to be misled, gentlemen, and it has never been too easy a task to penetrate the minds of statesmen, but here is one, I hope, who will remain for ever at our side—a man, indeed, whose head is second only to his nobility of heart.

Whereupon the Cardinal de la Valette seized the hem of the royal robe, kissing it with all the ardour of a lover, while the young Mazarin did likewise with the Cardinal's, with an expression of radiant joy and tenderness upon his face that few but a dexterous Italian could assume. Two waves of sycophants now broke, one against the King, the other against the Minister; the first group no less astute than the second, only a little more subtle, since it confined itself to addressing remarks to His Majesty, full of thanks for his decision, which Richelieu was bound to overhear. Richelieu himself, with a bow to the right of him, and a smile to the left, moved a couple of steps to the right of the King, where he remained standing, as in his rightful place. A stranger entering now would have received the impression that the King was on the

Cardinal's left. The chief ministers of the crown and officers of the army crowded around them, each impatiently awaiting his turn, fearful lest the one before him should have seized upon the flattering remark his own brain had just evolved, or the formula of adoration just conceived. Meanwhile, Fabert had retired into a corner of the tent, and seemed to pay but little attention to what was going on. He was talking to Montrésor and the gentlemen of Monsieur, for the simple reason that, being sworn enemies of the Cardinal, they were the only people left for him to talk to. For anyone less known than he was, this behaviour would have been extremely ill-advised ; but his habit of ignoring all forms of intrigue had already become a by-word, and he was said to return from a victory on the field of battle like the horse coming back from the hunt, allowing all the praises and much of the booty to go to the pack, and never attempting to recall his own part in the matter.

The storm now seemed entirely to have blown over, and a wonderful calm succeeded to the agitations of the afternoon ; the respectful murmur was interrupted at intervals by laughter pleasant to the ear, together with the sound of fervent protestations, while the Cardinal's voice could be heard exclaiming, from time to time : " Our poor Queen ! Soon we shall be welcoming her once more within our midst ! I never hoped to have such happiness before my death ! " The King meanwhile listened, all his confidence restored, and making no effort to conceal his satisfaction. " Surely this is an idea that has been sent to him by Heaven," he murmured to himself ; " this excellent man, against whom they have all been trying to warn me, was all the time thinking of nothing but the welfare of my family ; I have not felt so happy about anything since the birth of the Dauphin. The Holy Virgin herself is watching over my beloved land."

At this moment a captain of the guards entered to speak to the King.

" A messenger from Cologne ? " queried Louis. " Let him wait in my private room." Then, not being able

to restrain his impatience, he added : " I will go. I will go myself." And he disappeared into a little square tent leading out of the larger one. A glimpse was caught of a young horseman, carrying a black portfolio, and then the curtains were dropped again upon His Majesty.

The Cardinal, left alone amidst the Court, was now the sole focus of admiration, but his attitude had obviously altered, and his presence of mind seemed suddenly to have deserted him. More than once he enquired what the time was, appearing restless and ill at ease, and casting troubled glances towards the little tent, which now opened abruptly, revealing the King, standing alone within the entrance. His face was more pallid even than usual, and he was trembling from head to foot. In his hand he held a letter, adorned with five black seals.

" Messieurs," he said, in a voice which was haughty, though shaken with sobs, " the Queen Mother has just died at Cologne. It may be I am not the first to learn this news," he added, with a stern look at the Cardinal, who stood there like a statue. " God knows all. In one hour from now we attack the enemy's lines. Messieurs mes Maréchaux, follow me."

And, turning his back sharply upon them, he re-entered his tent, followed by all his generals.

The Court dispersed, but not before the Minister had taken his departure. His face wore not one sign of sadness or chagrin ; his steps were slow as when he entered, but he left the tent a conqueror.

CHAPTER IX

THE CITADEL

THERE are moments in the lives of us all, when we welcome with open arms any kind of disturbance that will afford an escape from our petty vexations. Cinq-Mars was now in this frame of mind, which generally arises from an over sensitive disposition, and a spirit

recently subjected to undue strain. He was tired of revolving in his mind the various combinations of events that he either desired or feared; tired of applying all his powers of calculation to the probabilities of chance; tired of regrets and dreams, predictions and chimeras, and the world of unreality he had been living in since his solitary journey, and it was a relief to find himself plunged once more into the noisy blustering universe, with a possibility of immediate danger to stimulate his nerve, and form an outlet for his youthful energy.

Ever since that evening in the inn near Loudon, his mind had been dwelling on these personal preoccupations, half sweet, half painful, and it was in a thoroughly overwrought condition that he had reached the camp at Perpignan, there to encounter the Abbé Gondi and accept his invitation, for no doubt the reader has recognised Cinq-Mars in the person of the melancholy young stranger all in black whom the clerical little fire-brand had selected for his second.

As a volunteer, he had had his tent pitched in that quarter of the camp assigned to young noblemen about to be presented to the King; thither he repaired to arm himself according to the fashion of those days, departing afterwards on horseback towards the Spanish fortress as arranged. He found himself the first arrival, and applauded the Abbé's choice of this little plot of grass as a field for his homicidal projects; for the outer wall of the building separated it from the French camp and served its purpose as a screen, the penalty at that time for risking one's own life as a mere matter of personal pleasure, being that of death.

While awaiting both his enemies and friends, Cinq-Mars took the opportunity of inspecting the Spanish fortress now before him. He observed how it was guarded with all the usual Spanish negligence, and seemed to rely solely on its man-power for defence, for both its battlements and its loopholes were dilapidated, guarded by four pieces of enormous cannon sunk in a mass of entangled weeds, which put them completely

out of action should the opposing forces choose to launch a precipitate attack against the walls.

The double effect of these four huge guns had been to prevent the besiegers from attacking, and the besieged from increasing their means of defence at this point. On one side advanced posts were established at rare intervals from one another, while on the other, the sentinels were few and ill-equipped. A young Spanish soldier was promenading aimlessly up and down the rampart, carbine in hand, stopping every now and then to observe Cinq-Mars, who was riding round the trenches and the marshy land that lay in front of them.

"Señor Caballero," he called out to him at length, "is it your intention to storm this fortress all alone upon your horse, after the manner of Don Quixote-Quixada de la Mancha?" Whereupon he placed his carbine in position on its tripod, and was about to aim, when an older Spaniard, very grave, enveloped in his dark mantle, came up to him and said:

"Ambrosio de Demonio, have you never heard that it is forbidden to waste powder except in case of an attack, just for the pleasure of killing a youngster who isn't worth the kindling of your tinder? This is the place where Charles V. threw the sleeping sentinel into the ditch, where he was drowned. And if you don't do your duty I shall do the same to you."

Whereupon Ambrosio shouldered his gun once more, and placing his tripod by his side, continued marching up and down the ramparts.

Cinq-Mars had been very little disturbed at this threatening gesture; all he had done being to lift his horse's reins, and be ready to spur him in the sides, knowing that with one bound his good beast could carry him into safety behind the wall of a little hut that was standing in the field, before the Spanish guard had even had time to light his powder. Also he knew that a silent pact between the two armies prevented the sharpshooters from firing on the sentinels, this being regarded on each side as a matter of assassination. So there

young d'Effiat remained, making his observations, until his attention was attracted by five horsemen moving in his direction. The first two, riding at a gallop, did not attempt to salute, but pulled up short, almost on top of him, and the next moment he found himself in the arms of his old friend, de Thou, locked in a close embrace, while the Abbé Gondi, roaring with laughter, shouted at the top of his voice :

"Here is Orestes once again discovering his Pylades, and just as we are about to settle accounts with a rascal who, take my word for it, would be hard put to it to discover a drop of royal blood in his veins !"

"And is it really my dear old friend, Cinq-Mars ?" exclaimed de Thou. "Why, I hadn't even heard of your arrival at the camp ! But it is you all right ! I would recognise you anywhere, though you do seem to have lost most of your colour. Have you been ill, old friend ? I have written to you so often, and never forgotten the good old times when we were boys together.

"While I," replied Henri, "must plead guilty to horrible neglect. I will tell you all about it, and explain everything, though I could not write it. How good you are ! Always the same old comrade !"

"I know you far too well," replied de Thou, "to think that any silly pride could ever stand in the way of a friendship such as ours."

Whereon they embraced with the tears in their eyes that life so seldom sees, and which our hearts are so much the better for the shedding.

This greeting only occupied a few brief moments, but Gondi, none the less, never ceased to tug them by their coats and cry :

"To horse, gentlemen, to horse ! Time enough for embraces later, if you are so tenderly disposed. We shall get arrested, if you don't take care, and the important thing of the moment is to dispose of our three friends, just on the point of arriving. We are in an ugly position here, with those three rascals opposite, archers near at hand, and those Spanish fellows up

above. We must guard ourselves on all three sides."

At this moment de Launay appeared, followed by his friends, and galloping up to his opponents, saluted them with all the formalities that the occasion required.

"Messieurs," said he, "the sooner we get to work the better, for there is talk of an attack on the enemy lines, and I must be at my post when the time arrives. Have you selected your opponents?"

"We are quite ready, monsieur," exclaimed Cinq-Mars; "and as to opponents, I should be happy to find myself face to face with you, for I have by no means forgotten the Maréchal de Bassompierre, and the wood at Chaumont; you already know my opinion of the insolent visit you paid to my mother."

"You are very young, monsieur. At your mother's house I fulfilled the obligations of a man of the world; with the Maréchal, those of a captain of the guards; those of a man of honour with the Abbé who has just called me out—and I shall hope soon to do the same towards yourself."

"That is, if I permit it," remarked the Abbé, already seated on his horse.

They took up their positions at sixty paces—and indeed, this was all that the plot of grass allowed them. The Abbé placed himself between de Thou and Cinq-Mars, the latter being stationed nearest to the ramparts, from which two Spanish officers and a handful of soldiers looked down upon this six-handed duel, a sight to which they seemed by no means unaccustomed. They regarded it with the same pleasure as one of their native bull-fights, and with laughter which had in it all the savagery of their Arabian forefathers. At a sign from Gondi, the horses started off at a gallop, and met in the middle without colliding; six pistol shots rang out simultaneously, and the combatants were wreathed from view in a cloud of smoke. It cleared away, and revealed three men and three horses still standing; Cinq-Mars was still mounted, and reaching his hand to his opponent, as calm as himself; while from the other end, de Thou was approaching his adversary, whose horse he had

killed, and whom he was helping to rise. As for Gondi and de Launay, both had disappeared. Cinq-Mars, looking uneasily around for them, was aware of the Abbé's horse bounding ahead of him, dragging at his heels the future Cardinal, whose foot had become entangled in the stirrup, and such were his oaths, it might well have been believed that the language of the camp was all he had even been taught. His nose and both his hands were bleeding from the fall, and his futile efforts to seize the tufts of grass, while his furious gaze was fixed upon his steed, that was proceeding to trail him towards the ditch, filled with water, that surrounded the fort. Fortunately, Cinq-Mars, slipping between the edge of the swamp and the horse, seized it by the bridle and stopped it in its course.

"Delighted to see, my dear Abbé, that you are not really hurt, judging by your energy of speech!"

"*Par la corbleu*," cried out Gondi, rubbing the dirt out of his eyes, "to fire off a pistol in the face of a giant like that I was obliged to rise in my stirrups, and that unseated me a little; but I think he came to ground as well."

"You think rightly, monsieur, said de Thou, coming up to them; "for there is his horse, swimming in the moat with his master, whose brains have been blown out. It is time we thought of getting away."

"Getting away? Easier said than done, gentlemen," remarked Cinq-Mars's opponent, who had now joined the party. "There goes the cannon as signal for attack; I never thought to hear it so early; if we return now we shall run into the Swiss and the infantry who are attacking in this direction."

"M. de Fontrailles is perfectly right," said de Thou; "but if we do not go back, our Spanish friends here are getting under fire, and we shall soon hear the bullets whistling around our heads."

"Well, we must hold a council of war," replied Gondi. "Go and call M. de Montrésor, who is vainly searching for poor de Launay's body. You didn't wound him, did you, de Thou?"

"Oh no, M. l'Abbé; we haven't all got the same skilled hand as you. So spoke Montrésor, who now came up to them, obviously rather shaken as the result of his fall. "Nor shall we have the time now to continue with our swords."

"As for continuing, gentlemen, I think not," said Fontrailles. "M. de Cinq-Mars has already loaded me with obligation. My pistol having missed fire, there I was, with the cold steel of his weapon pressed against my cheek, whereupon what does he do but withdraw it and immediately fire into the air. An action which leaves me at his disposal for evermore."

"No time to talk of that now, gentlemen," said Cinq-Mars. "A ball has just whistled past my ear, and the attack is breaking out on all sides. We are surrounded both by enemies and friends."

And, of a truth, the bombardment had begun; the fortress, the town and the troops were all enveloped in smoke, the building in front of them being the only one not immediately under attack. For the most part its occupants seemed engrossed in examining their defences."

"I rather think the enemy has made a sally," declared Montrésor; "for the smoke is clearing off the plain, and I can see masses of charging horsemen, protected by the cannon on the square."

Cinq-Mars still continued his observation of the walls in front of him.

"Gentlemen," said he, "there is one course open to us and that is, to force an entrance into this badly-guarded fortress."

"Excellent idea in itself, monsieur," replied Fontrailles, "but we should be five fighting against thirty, with no means of concealing the fact."

"It is a fine idea, all the same," quoth Gondi. "Better to be shot up here than strung up down below, when once we get discovered; for they must already have noticed M. de Launay's absence from his company, and the matter will soon be known to the whole Court."

"*Parbleu*, gentlemen," called out Montrésor, "they are sending us relief!"

A quantity of cavalry hereupon galloped up in the utmost disorder, highly conspicuous on account of their red uniforms. Apparently their objective was the very field where our embarrassed duellists were standing, for as soon as the first horsemen made their appearance, an order to halt was given, and could be heard repeated throughout the ranks.

"Let us go up to them. They are the Cardinal's Guards," said Fontrailles. "I recognise them by their black cockades; we can easily slip in amongst them, for they look to me to be in the midst of a retreat."

The five men advanced towards the seething mass of riders, to find their conjecture perfectly correct. But instead of the consternation proper to the circumstances, nothing but gaiety and laughter prevailed amongst them.

"*Pardieu*, Cahuzac," a horseman was heard to exclaim, "your brute can run better than mine! You must have been practising him on His Majesty's hunting days!"

"Hallo, Locmaria! A nice mess those plumes of yours have got into! You look exactly like one of those weeping willows! If we were to follow you now, we should all end in our graves!"

"I told you beforehand, gentlemen," replied that young officer, in a tone of the deepest annoyance; "I was perfectly certain that this Friar Joseph, with that finger of his in every pie, was wrong in giving us the Cardinal's orders to charge. But what if the officer, whose privilege it is to command you, had refused to comply? Would that have met with your approval?"

"No--no--no!" shouted all the young men, rapidly starting to close up their ranks.

"I said at the time," cried out the old Marquis de Coislin, with eyes that burned with the fire of youth, for all his whitened hairs, "that if you were ordered to storm a fort on horseback you would do it!"

"Bravo! Bravo!" shouted back the warriors, with thunders of applause.

"Very good, Monsieur le Marquis," said Cinq-Mars, riding up to him; "here is an opportunity of putting your project into execution. I am only a humble volunteer, but a moment ago I was examining this fortress with these gentlemen, and I believe it could be carried."

"A scheme like that, monsieur, would need the most careful consideration. In the first place——"

At this moment, a bullet, fired from the spot they were discussing, was lodged in the head of the Marquis's horse.

"Locmaria! De Mouy! Follow on and lead the charge!" cried out both companies of cadets, believing their leader to have been killed.

"One moment, one moment, gentlemen," exclaimed old Coislin, scrambling to his feet; "with your permission I will lead it myself. Lead on, M. le Volontaire, for the Spaniards have invited us to the ball, and it is not for us to refuse their invitation."

Scarcely had the old soldier mounted another horse, brought to him by one of his band, than, without waiting for his word of command, the whole brigade of youth, headed by Cinq-Mars and his friends, dashed off into the swamp, where, to the Spaniards' great astonishment, their horses only sunk as far as to their hocks, and notwithstanding a hail of bullets from two of the large cannons, they all arrived pell mell on a little square of grass just below the half-ruined ramparts. In the excitement of the charge, Cinq-Mars and Fontrailles, together with young Locmaria, put their horses at the rampart walls, but the three animals were quickly dispatched by the sharp fusilade which met their masters.

"Dismount, gentlemen," cried out old Coislin; "leave your horses, and forward with sword and pistol!"

All obeyed rapidly and proceeded to pour into the breach. But de Thou, whose presence of mind was part of his constitution, no less than his faithfulness, had never lost young Henri from his sight, and directly he fell from his horse was ready to receive him in his arms. He

stood him on his feet, replaced his sword in his hand, and calmly remarked, oblivious of the bullets raining around them at every point :

“ Well, Henri, a pretty figure I seem to be cutting here, in my dress of a sober-sided lawyer ! ”

“ *Parblieu !* ” retorted Montrésor, coming forward ; “ what about our clerical friend ? ”

As for little Gondi himself, he was jostling his way through all the cavaliers, crying at the top of his voice : “ Three duels and a charge ! Now’s my chance at last to get rid of this priest’s cassock ! ” On which the Spaniard that happened to be in front of him would receive a hard and fast blow with the edge of his sword.

The defence was soon over ; the Spanish soldiers, not having had either time or presence of mind to reload their weapons, collapsing simultaneously before their French attackers.

“ Gentlemen,” cried out Locmaria, throwing up his hat into the air, “ at last a first-rate story to tell to our lady loves in Paris ! ”

Whereupon Cinq-Mars, de Thou, and all the officers of the Red Guard, sword in their right hands, and pistol in their left, pushing and scrambling, and injuring one another as much as the enemy in their terrific haste, finally overflowed on to the parapets, much the same as a narrow-necked bottle is obliged to squirt out the water that it is too full to receive.

The vanquished soldiers, now prostrate on their knees, were allowed to drift back into the fort, as unworthy of further notice, while their conquerors careered madly around, with all the zest and high spirits of school-boys out on a pic-nic.

Regarding them stood a gloomy figure, wrapped in a brown cloak. He was a Spanish officer.

“ What sort of devils from hell do you call these, Ambrosio ? ” he enquired from one of his men. “ I have not yet met their kind in France. If this is the stuff of which Louis’s army is made, there is nothing to stop him from conquering the whole of Europe.”

" Oh, they're not all like that, take my word for it. Just a band of adventurers. Anything for pillage is their motto. Nothing to lose, and everything to gain "

" You may be right," replied the officer " I will approach one of them about my ransom."

And he slowly drew near to a pink-skinned youth of about eighteen years who had seated himself on the parapet, to consult a large round watch, studded with rubies, suspended from his waist by a knot of ribbons, while with an embroidered handkerchief held in his hand, he was mopping his forehead and his fair golden curls.

The Spaniard paused in astonishment. Had he not himself seen this lad beating back the Spanish soldiers, he would have deemed him capable of nothing but the warbling of amorous ditties on a suitably elegant couch. But, in the light of the soldier's recent remark, these pretty baubles of his might well be regarded as the loot from some lady's boudoir, so drawing near, he fired off his question :

" *Hombre!* I am an officer. Are you willing to set me free to return to my country again ? "

The other regarded him boyishly, thinking evidently of his own family, and then made answer :

" I will present you to the Marquis de Coislin, monsieur, who no doubt will grant you your request. Is your family from Castille or Arragon ? "

" Your marquis will only ask permission from somebody else, and probably keep me waiting a year. I will give you four thousand ducats if you will let me slip away."

But the boy's face now flushed scarlet with fury, and his blue eyes shone with rage, as he replied :

" I take money ? Be off with you ! Imbecile ! " And with one blow of his fist he struck the other full in the face. In a trice, the Spaniard had drawn his long dagger from his doublet, and seizing the Frenchman by the arm, prepared to plunge the blade forthwith into his heart ; but the latter, nimble and full of strength, clutched the dagger with his right hand, and, quivering

with anger, by sheer brute force contrived to turn the weapon against his opponent's breast.

His friends now hastened up. "Hallo . . . hallo . . . gently, young Olivier . . ." they cried. "There are quite enough Spaniards to our credit as it is." And they disarmed the enemy officer.

"What shall we do with the fool?" said one.

"I wouldn't have him for a servant," replied the other.

"He deserves to be hanged," said a third; "but we don't do hangman's work, gentlemen. Let us hand him over to that Swiss battalion there in the field."

The imperturbable Spaniard, once more wrapping his cloak around him, proceeded to march of his own accord in the direction of the Swiss soldiers, followed by Ambrosio, and urged from behind by five or six of his mad young captors. Meanwhile, the first group of attackers was bent on following up its unexpected success. Cinq-Mars, with the help of old Coislin, had made a tour of the fort, only to realise, to their intense annoyance, that their distance from the town was too great to enable them to make use of their position. They returned forthwith to the parapet, rejoining de Thou and the Abbé Gondi, whom they found making merry with the rest of the cadets.

"A pretty triumph, gentlemen! But what else can you expect, with religion on one side of us and justice on the other?"

"Religion and justice, eh? Well, I dare swear they struck a stout blow with the rest of us!"

But at Cinq-Mars's approach all was silent, except for whispered utterances, demanding to know his name. A moment later he found himself the centre of an admiring group, each and all of them endeavouring to grasp him by the hand.

"You are right, my lads," cried out their old captain. "He's the best thing that has happened to us to-day! A volunteer, he tells me, on his way to be presented to His Majesty by the Cardinal!"

"The Cardinal! We'll see to that! We'll do the

presenting ourselves. He's no Cardinal's man! Far too fine a fellow for that!" So shouted all the young men in chorus.

"I could soon cure you of that desire, monsieur," cried out young Olivier d'Entraigues, as he drew near, "for I have been one of Richelieu's pages, and know him every inch. Better take service in the Red Guard. You'll find lots of good friends there."

The old Marquis spared Cinq-Mars the embarrassment of a reply by ordering the trumpets to sound a recall. The cannons had ceased firing, and a guard's warning already been received that both King and Cardinal were expected within the lines to review the results of the day's engagement. Once again the horses were ridden through the breach—by now a sufficiently long one—and the two companies lined up to command the position, which, on the face of it, looked humanly impossible of achievement by any save unmounted troops.

CHAPTER X

REWARDS

"In order to alleviate the first pangs of a royal sorrow"—thus spake Richelieu—"to find an outlet for the painful emotions fretting away that poor weak soul, I consent to the siege of this town; to ensure the departure of Louis, I will allow him to inflict, on various unfortunate soldiers, the blows he dare not bestow upon me. Let his rage by all means become cooled in a sea of blood of no account; but none the less shall my indestructable purpose remain unchanged, by this caprice of glory on his part. Not for another two years shall this town fall into French hands. It shall come into my toils on the day I have determined, not before. Let cannons resound, and the noise of bombs rend the air; let the sagacious captains chew their plans of campaign, and the young blades fight to their heart's content. By me shall the noise of your

tumult be silenced at the end of all things, and your vain projects vanish like smoke, while I lead you into the paths of your utter bewilderment."

Such were the thoughts revolving beneath the bald skull of the Cardinal Duke before the attack was launched, a small section of which we have already witnessed. He had taken up a position on horseback, on a hill to the north of the town. Behind him were collected a crowd of generals and eminent noblemen, also mounted, all preserving the strictest silence at a distance of twenty paces. The Cardinal had begun by following the operations on the minutest scale, but having now chosen his place of observation, he remained motionless as a statue, contemplating and revolving the fate of the besiegers and besieged. Beneath him he could survey the army in all its aspects, and not a man under arms but regarded him as his own immediate chief, and waited on his gesture of command. So long had France been subject to his yoke, that any suspicions that another in his place might have aroused, had given way to admiration. Not for a moment did any man find it in his heart to feel amused or even surprised at the spectacle of a priest clad in armour, and his sternness of character as well as aspect were sufficient to quell any ironical conjectures that might arise. The Cardinal's dress at the moment was entirely military: a surcoat the colour of dead leaves, bordered with gold; a cuirass the colour of water; a sword at his side; pistols in the holster of his saddle, and a large plumed hat, though for the most part his head remained bare, except for its red skull cap. Two pages stood behind his horse, one bearing his gauntlet gloves, the other his helmet, while beside him waited the Captain of his Guards.

Having recently been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Army, at His Majesty's pleasure, the generals turned to him for all instructions. But Richelieu, knowing only too well the actual source of his royal master's displeasure, made a point of referring their enquiries to the King—the result being just as he had

anticipated. Louis XIII. took up his place at the Cardinal's side with the air of a schoolboy, forced to admit that, after all, his master is in the right. His manner was haughty and dissatisfied ; his language curt and dry. The Cardinal remained impassive. It was the King who, while consulting his adviser, adopted the tone of command, thereby trying to reconcile his weakness with his power, his irresolution with his pride, his incapacity with his pretensions, while the man who was his master dictated his commands to him with an air of the utmost humility.

" I wish the attack delivered immediately, Cardinal," proclaimed Louis on his arrival. " That is," he added, as an afterthought, " when you have made all your preparations, and the time has arrived agreed upon between you and our generals."

" Sire, if I may venture to say so, I would suggest that Your Majesty give the order to attack in another quarter-of-an-hour, for by that time the third line will have been able to advance sufficiently."

" Yes, yes, very good, M. le Cardinal. Just what I was thinking myself. I will give my own instructions, for I wish everything to come from me. Schomberg ! Schomberg ! In a quarter-of-an-hour I wish to hear the signal for attack. Those are the royal orders ! "

Schomberg, departing to command the third wing of the army, gave instructions accordingly, and the signal was fired.

The batteries, placed in position some time ago by Marshal Meilleraie, now began their bombardment, but the attack was half-hearted, since the gunners were convinced that their objective was unattainable, and their experience, added to that sixth sense and quick insight common to every French soldier, made them realise only too clearly the position that should have been theirs.

The slowness of their firing did not escape the King's notice.

" La Meilleraie," he cried out impatiently, " your

batteries are not working properly. Your gunners are all asleep ! ”

The Maréchal remained silent, as did also all the other artillery officers. They had looked in the direction of the Cardinal, sitting motionless as an equestrian statue, and they thought it best to follow his example. The only answer was that the fault lay, not with the soldiers, but with those responsible for the false disposition of the guns, and this being Richelieu himself, who pretended to believe that they were disposed to the best possible advantage, the officers' tongues were more or less tied.

This silence astonished the King, who, fearful lest his remarks had revealed some dire ignorance of military science, flushed slightly, and, drawing near to those nobles gathered around him, remarked, to cover up his embarrassment :

“ D'Angoulême, Beaufort, have I not cause for displeasure ? They might be so many mummies ! ”

Charles de Valois approached and said :

“ It seems to me, Sire, that the guns they are using are not those of Engineer Pompée-Targon.”

“ *Parbleu,*” said the Duc de Beaufort, with his eyes fixed on Richelieu, “ we were more anxious to take la Rochelle than we are to take Perpignan. Our guns are trained on all the wrong places. At this rate the defenders of the fort will have nothing to worry about for this many a day ! ”

The Cardinal still remained immovable and spoke not one word, though he signed to Fabert to draw near. The latter emerged from the group gathered around him, and drew up his horse near to Richelieu and the Captain of his Guards.

The Duc de la Rochefoucault now drew near to the King to say : “ It is my opinion, Sire, that our feeble manner of shelling has given rise to a spirit of insolence among our friends the enemy, for here is a detachment coming towards us in the direction of Your Majesty—and they are by no means lacking in numbers.”

“ Very well,” replied the King, drawing his sword,

“ we will charge, and make the impudent scoundrels think better of it. Order the cavalry to charge with me, d’Angoulême. Where are they, Cardinal ? ”

“ Behind this hill, Sire, are six regiments of dragoons, and mounted infantry of La Roque ; while all around you, you may see my own guards and cadets, whom I implore Your Majesty to make use of, for your own guards have already been lead in the wrong direction by the Marquis de Coislin, always a little over impetuous. Joseph shall go and recover them.”

He spoke softly to the Capucin who was at his side, garbed in a military cloak that sat on him most awkwardly. Directly afterwards the latter disappeared into the plain.

The Spanish infantry continued to pour through the gate of Nôtre Dame like a dark moving forest, while a heavy body of cavalry sallied out through another gate and collected in the plain. The French army, continuing to fight at the foot of the King’s hill, behind fortifications of turf and faggots, beheld with dismay their own King’s soldiers surprised on both sides by regiments ten times superior to themselves in numbers.

“ Sound the charge ! ” cried out Louis XIII, “ or poor old Coislin will be lost ! ”

And he careered down the hill, followed by troops as ardent as himself, but before he had arrived at the foot, together with his musketeers, the two endangered companies had taken their decision. With a cry of “ *Vive le Roi*,” they had borne down like streaked lightning upon the long column of cavalry, and piercing it with a large and bloody hole, passed through to the other side in order to rally their forces behind the Spanish fort as we have already seen, leaving the enemy cavalry so amazed, that they abandoned all idea of pursuit and only thought of closing up their ranks.

The army roared with delight. The King stopped in astonishment ; he looked about, and saw in the eyes of all those around him a burning desire to attack ; all the valour of his own race was sparkling in his eyes. For

one moment he remained there in suspense, listening with exultation to the roar of cannon, the smell of the powder delighting his very nostrils ; for the time being he possessed another life, and became a Bourbon once again. All those who saw him thus believed themselves commanded by another being, as raising his sword, and lifting his eyes towards the dazzling sun, he shouted :

“ Follow me, brave friends ! Here I am in very truth, King of France ! ”

Whereon the cavalry broke forth into a charge, the violence of which caused the earth to shake beneath their feet, and concealed them from sight within a cloud of dust, as they joined issue with the Spanish horsemen, mingling their cries with theirs.

“ Fabert ! ” shouted the Cardinal in a voice of thunder, “ order your gunners to retire from their false position over there ! Direct them upon the Spanish infantry that is surrounding the King. Speed, speed, for the safety of your Sovereign ! ”

Whereupon the whole group, so motionless up to now, became a mass of excitement ; generals shouted their instructions, aide-de-camps departed in a flash, disappearing into the plain, where they could be seen jumping ditches, clearing barriers, and arriving at their destination almost as quick as the thought which prompted them. Almost immediately the slow flickering fires, that had been seen playing around the half-hearted batteries, were changed into one immense continuous flame, with smoke rising into the sky above it, and floating around in divers forms. The sound of the firing, hitherto little but a feeble echo, became a roar of thunder, rumbling with all the rapid beats of a drummer beating the charge ; while, directed from three different points, long tongues of fire shot forth and descended upon the sombre columns that the besieged had sent forth from their town.

All this time Richelieu had remained in his place, with shining eyes and imperative gestures, giving command upon command, with a look towards those that were

receiving them that meant death if they were not instantly obeyed.

"The King has ridden down the cavalry, but the infantry still resists; our guns are only killing them instead of vanquishing. Three regiments of infantry forward immediately, Gassion, la Melleraié and Lesdiguières! Take the column by a flank attack. Give orders to the rest of the army to cease from fighting, and stand quiet the whole length of the line! Paper here! I will write to Schomberg myself!"

A page dismounted and came forward with pencil and paper. The minister, with the help of four of his men, got down painfully from his horse, crying out at the pain it meant to him. Stifling his groans, he seated himself on a gun-carriage, the page stooping in front of him and presenting his back as a table, while the Cardinal rapidly wrote the order which has still been preserved for us to read, and which might well serve as a model to the diplomats of our day who, to all intents and purposes, are more concerned with keeping a perfect equilibrium between two thoughts, than in striving to achieve those combinations which cut across the world's destiny and deflect it in its course—such is the power of a great contriving brain.

"Monsieur le Maréchal, risk no chances, and think well before you move. While informing you that the King desires you should run no risks, it is not His Majesty's intention to forbid you to attack, but to avoid a general combat, unless your situation be sufficiently favourable to ensure decisive results: otherwise, the responsibility of the battle will rest with you alone."

His orders once given, the old minister remained seated on the gun-carriage, his chin resting in his hands, silently and peacefully regarding the monarch fighting at his feet. So might an aged wolf, replete with victims, have surveyed the fight between the lion and a pack of bulls he has not dared attack himself. Now and again his tongue might be seen licking his thin lips, and his nostrils quiver with a thrill of satisfaction, for the scent

of blood was very pleasant to him, and by no means unfamiliar.

It was noted by his servants, and all those who went near him, that he had spent the entire day without the slightest nourishment, and such was his concentration of mind upon the events in hand, that even his bodily pains had seemed forgotten. It was this power of abstraction and continuous force of will which raised him so near the heights of genius—heights which would have been attained, had not his soul been lacking in any quality of nobleness, and his heart dead to any generous impulse whatsoever.

Events on the field of battle turned out precisely as the Cardinal had wished. Louis XIII. snatched greedily at the victory his master had allowed him, and emerged with all the feelings of grandeur and triumph proper to the occasion. Retracing his steps, after the engagement, it was gratifying in the extreme to find the field completely cleared of the enemy, while he proudly made his way, even under the fire of the Spanish guns, which either from bad handling, or a secret pact with the first minister, or even a certain sense of shame at killing the King of France, seldom fired their missiles within ten feet of where he stood, and only served the purpose of enhancing the King's reputation for personal bravery.

But his expression changed with every step that took him nearer to the spot where Richelieu awaited him: the flush of battle faded from his cheeks, and the look of triumph from his eyes. Little by little, his features regained their customary pallor, as being the only hue befitting a royal countenance, and the brief spell of animation gave place to the deepest melancholy. He found the Cardinal just as he had left him. He was still on horseback, and having bowed to his Sovereign with all his accustomed formality, and paid him some words of compliment, he drew nearer, to follow the manœuvres by his side, and observe the day's results. The royal followers gathered around them, both before and behind, at a respectful distance.

The dexterous statesman took good care not to betray, either by word or gesture, the part he had played in the conduct of the battle; and it was strange to observe how the various officers who now rode up to report, seemed to divine this desire, and to assist it in every way by refraining from undue subservience on their part; everything was referred to His Majesty. After which, at his monarch's side, the Cardinal inspected that part of the field of battle which had not been directly under his observation, and noted with satisfaction how Schomberg, who knew him well, had conducted all things in accordance with his instructions, involving nothing but a few light troops, fighting just sufficient to absolve him from the stigma of inaction, while not enough to ensure any definite result. This proceeding was entirely satisfactory to the Cardinal, and not at all distasteful to the King, whose pride was flattered at the idea of being sole hero of the day. He was even pleased to persuade himself, and others too, that all Schomberg's efforts had been abortive, and took great pains to inform him that this afforded no disgrace, the enemy having proved itself to be far more formidable than had been originally supposed.

"And as proof," added he, 'that this day has done nothing but enhance your reputation in our eyes, we herewith bestow upon you the title of *chevalier*, with all the privilege of access to our person that such a rank involves.'

Whereupon the Cardinal, passing by, shook him affectionately by the hand, and the astonished Marshal, overwhelmed by these unexpected favours, followed his monarch with bowed head, like a guilty man, and consoled himself by rapidly surveying within his mind the various acts of merit in his career, hitherto unrecognised, but which would now serve to alleviate any qualms of conscience that might be incurred.

The King was about to retire, when the Duc de Beaufort, peering in front of him with an air of the utmost astonishment, exclaimed:

"Why, Sire, unless my eyes have been affected by the firing, or my brain by the heat of the sun, I verily believe I see on the fort opposite those very mounted troops in scarlet, looking for all the world like Your Majesty's own Light Horsemen, whom we all believed to have been killed."

The Cardinal frowned. "You are mistaken, monsieur," said he. "The imprudence of M. de Coislin is responsible for the destruction of His Majesty's own brigade. I was only saying just now, that it might be advisable to suppress, once for all, these unnecessary regiments——"

"Pardon me, Your Eminence," interrupted the Duc de Beaufort, "there is no mistake about it, and there go six or seven of them on foot, driving their prisoners before them."

"Very good, we will go and look into the matter," remarked the King, somewhat indifferently, "and if I find my old friend Coislin alive, so much the better."

There was nothing to do but to follow, and the cavalcade proceeded through the swampy ground and the wreckage with the utmost precaution. But what was their astonishment, on perceiving two companies in scarlet uniforms drawn up above their heads, as though on parade.

"In the name of Heaven!" called out Louis XIII., "there doesn't seem to be one of them missing! Why, Marquis, you have actually kept your promise of storming stone walls on horseback!"

"The point of attack has been sufficiently badly chosen," observed Richelieu, with an air of the utmost disdain; "it must have cost many lives, and has done nothing whatever to advance the siege of Perpignan."

"*Ma foi*, but that is true," cried Louis, speaking to Richelieu in a more cordial tone than he had adopted since the news of the Queen's death. "I deplore the amount of bloodshed."

"There has been none, Sire, except for two young cadets, slightly wounded," replied Coislin; "and we

gained several acquisitions in the volunteers who guided us here."

"Who are they?" asked the King.

"Three of them have modestly retired, Sire, but the youngest you see here before you, and it was he gave me the idea of the attack. Our two companies request the honour of presenting him to Your Majesty!"

Cinq-Mars, seated on his horse behind the old Captain, removed his hat, thus disclosing his young pale face, his great black eyes, and long brown locks.

"He reminds me of someone," said the King. "What do you say, Cardinal?"

The latter had already looked penetratingly at the newcomer, and now replied:

"If I am not much mistaken, this young man is——"

"Henri d'Effiat," declared the volunteer, with a low bow.

"Why, Sire, the very young man I was about to present to Your Majesty with my own hand, and whom I had already brought before your notice, as the Marshal's second son."

"Ah," said Louis, with increasing animation, "I am delighted that he should be brought before me under such favourable circumstances. A worthy beginning, my boy, for the son of such a father. You shall follow us back to the camp, where we shall have much to say to you. But—what do I see? Monsieur de Thou here also! And whom have you come here to judge, may I ask, monsieur?"

"I rather think, Sire," replied Coislin, "that it was to condemn certain Spaniards to death, for he was the second to make his way into the fort."

"I have struck not a soul, monsieur," interrupted de Thou, blushing furiously; "fighting is not my trade; I was merely accompanying M. de Cinq-Mars, my friend."

"Your modesty pleases us quite as much as your courage, and we shall forget neither. Is there not some vacant post at hand, Cardinal?"

Richelieu had no love for M. de Thou. His dislikes

were nearly always actuated by some mystery, and the cause of this one was certainly far to seek. It arose from a certain phrase to be found in the *History of President de Thou*, the father of this man, in which he had vilified for all posterity a great-uncle of the Cardinal, first a monk, and then apostate, and tainted with all the vices common to humanity.

Richelieu leant over towards Father Joseph and whispered: "Note that man; his father put my name into his history. Very good—I will see that mine contains his"

And, of a truth, it was written there later, in terms of blood. For the moment, in order to avoid replying to His Majesty's question, he pretended not to hear, and to be solely concerned with the merits of Cinq-Mars, and his desire to see him established at Court.

"I had already promised you to give him a captaincy in my Guards," said the King. "He shall be enrolled to-morrow. I wish to know him better, and if he pleases me, his fortune shall not stop there. And now we will retire. The sun has already set, and we are far from our army. Order my two excellent companies to follow me."

The minister, having transmitted the order, the complimentary part of which he was careful to suppress, took up his place at the King's right hand, and the entire escort rode away from the fort, now left in the care of the Swiss Guards.

The two scarlet bands slowly defiled through the gap their horses had made so well and promptly, and their demeanour was grave and silent. Cinq-Mars drew near to his friend.

"Is this the way that heroes are received?" he asked him. "Not one mark of favour, not even a complimentary phrase for all these brave cadets!"

"While I, on the other hand," replied de Thou, in his simple way, "who never meant to come here at all, have been loaded with compliments! Such is Court life; but the true Judge sits above, whom nothing can blind."

"All of which won't prevent us from getting killed to-morrow, if necessity compels," declared young Olivier with a laugh.

CHAPTER XI

CROSS PURPOSES

IN order to appear before the King, Cinq-Mars had been obliged to mount the horse of one of the wounded cadets, his own having been killed in front of the fort. But now, while the two companies were slowly filing on their way, he felt a tap on his shoulder, and there was old Grandchamp holding by the bridle a magnificent grey animal.

"Will monsieur be pleased to mount his own horse now?" he enquired. "I have put the saddle on it, and the gold-mounted bridle that I found in the ditch. God in Heaven! When I think that one of those Spaniards might have got hold of them, or even a Frenchman—for there are plenty of people about in these days who think that findings are takings. As the old proverb says: 'All that falls into the ditch is to the poor soldier's good.' And while they were about it, they might just as well have taken those four hundred golden crowns which monsieur—though, of course, I don't wish to say anything—had left among his holsters. And the pistols, too! What pistols! I bought them in Germany, and they are as good to-day as ever they were. Wasn't it enough to get the poor little black horse killed, that was born in England, as true as I was born in Tours in Touraine? Did you need to let all your valuables go into the enemy's hands?"

While relieving himself of these complaints, the old man was putting the finishing touches to the horse's saddle. The column took a long time in defiling, and he took the opportunity of paying the minutest attention to the adjustment of bit and girths, until he had said all that he had to say.

"I ask your pardon, monsieur, if I am a little slow, but I bruised my arm slightly in helping M. de Thou who had just lifted you on to your feet during the big struggle."

"What! Do you mean to tell me you were there too, old idiot?" cried Cinq-Mars. "These things are nothing to do with you. I told you to remain in the camp."

"I can't stay in the camp, monsieur. I don't know how to, and if I hear a shot fired from a gun it makes me quite ill not to see the flash of powder. As for being my business—isn't it my business to care for the horses and for you as their rider, monsieur? And don't you think, if I had only been able, I should have saved the life of this poor black beast now lying in the bottom of the ditch? Oh, but I was fond of that little horse, monsieur! He won three races in his time, and he never ought to have died so soon! He wouldn't take his hay from any hands but mine, and he used to rub his head against me as I fed him. If you want a proof, you can see it in that bit he took out of my left ear one day—not to hurt me, for he would never have done that . . . You should have heard the way he would neigh with rage whenever anyone else came near him; he broke Jean's leg one day just for that! Oh, but I did love him! I held him up with one hand as he was falling, and M. de Locmaria with the other, and first of all I thought they would both soon be on their feet again—but I'm sorry to say that only one of them survived, and that, the one I knew the least. It seems to amuse you, monsieur, my running on like this about your horse, but you forget that in war-time the horse is the soul of the soldier! Yes, monsieur, his whole soul! For who is it that gets the infantry on the run? Why, the horse, of course! It certainly isn't the rider, who once he starts off is nothing but a hay dummy! And who is it performs all the wonderful actions for others to admire? Why, the horse! And more often than not, the master gets all the halfpence and the poor brute nothing but kicks! Who is it wins the prizes at the race meetings?

The horse, of course ! And he doesn't even have a relish for his supper, while his owner pockets all the money, and is the envy of all his friends, just as if he had won it by his own efforts ! Who is it goes out hunting and comes back without the least little bit of game between his teeth ? Again the horse ! And sometimes it happens that the poor beast even gets eaten himself. I remember once during the Marshal's campaign . . . but what is it, monsieur ? What's the matter with you ? You're as white as a sheet !

Bind my leg up with something as quick as you can—a handkerchief, a strap, anything. Something's hurting me . . . I don't know what . . . ”

“ Your boot is pierced, monsieur, and it must be a bullet ; but ‘ lead is a good friend to man,’ as they say.”

“ All the same it hurts me enough !

“ Ah . . . it's the things that love us most that chastise the hardest, monsieur. Never speak hardly of lead . . . after all, it's lead . . . ”

While occupied in binding up his master's leg above the knee, the old fellow was about to start off on a panegyric of lead, in much the same way as he had dealt with the horse, when suddenly both he and Cinq-Mars were forced to attend to a noisy quarrel that had broken out between some of the Swiss soldiers left behind to guard the fort after all the others had departed. There was much talk and infinite gesticulation, the centre of discussion apparently being two men surrounded by about thirty soldiers.

D'Effiat, leaning over his saddle, and still holding out his leg to be bound up, tried hard to hear their words and understand them, but he knew not a word of German, and could not arrive at the cause of their dispute. Grandchamp, still engaged on his task, also listened with the utmost seriousness, and quite suddenly burst into a roar of laughter, holding his sides in a manner that with him was totally unprecedented

“ What is he saying ?

“ He is telling them to string them both up.”

"Wait a bit, wait a bit," called out Cinq-Mars, starting to try and walk. But his bad leg gave way beneath him.

"Help me to mount, Grandchamp . . ."

"But, monsieur, you mustn't dream . . . that wound of yours . . ."

"Do as I tell you, and mount yourself."

The old soldier obeyed, not without much grumbling, and carried out his master's peremptory order to interrupt the Swiss soldiers, already down in the plain, and on the point of hanging their prisoners to a tree—or rather of allowing them to do this for themselves, for the officer, with all the coolness peculiar to his race, had already knotted the cord around his neck, and without waiting to be asked, had mounted the ladder propped up against the trunk, and was about to fasten the other end of the cord; the soldier, meanwhile, with the same calm indifference, supporting the ladder, as he regarded the Swiss troopers brawling around him.

Cinq-Mars arrived just in time to rescue them, giving his name to the soldier in command, and with Grandchamp as interpreter, informing them that the two prisoners belonged to him, and he was about to conduct them to his tent: that he was a Captain of the Guards, and would undertake all responsibility. The German, accustomed to severe discipline, dared not reply, and the only resistance came from the prisoner himself. This officer, still on top of the ladder, turned around with a sardonic laugh, delivering a speech as though from a pulpit.

"And I would very much like to know what you think you are doing here? Who told you I wanted to live?"

"I haven't asked anybody," replied Cinq-Mars. "And I really do not care what becomes of you afterwards; but for the moment I wish to prevent what I consider to be an unjust and inhuman action. Kill yourself afterwards if you like."

"That's well enough said," remarked the ferocious Spaniard, "and I like the sound of you. I thought, first of all, that you wanted to play the generous man

and force me to be grateful—a thing I loathe above all others. Under the circumstances, I will consent to come down, but I warn you I shall hate you just as much as before, because you are a Frenchman, and I shall not thank you either, for what you are doing is nothing but tit-for-tat. It was I who stopped you being killed this morning by this young soldier of mine who was just turning his musket on you, and I've never known him fail to bring his chamois down yet, on the worst possible mountains in Spain."

"Very good," said Cinq-Mars. "Get down."

It was one of this boy's characteristics to respond to others precisely in the same way as they chose to deal with him, and his abruptness on this occasion served him in good stead.

"There's a fine proud stomach for you, monsieur," remarked Grandchamp. "Your father in your place would have left him on the ladder. Come along now, Louis, Étienne, Germain—come and keep an eye on your master's prisoners— and a very pretty lot they are, too. If they bring us any luck I shall be vastly astonished."

Cinq-Mars, who was suffering slightly from the movement of his horse, now walked it at a slow pace, so as not to out-distance the men on foot, following in the footsteps of the two companies already far ahead of him, and wondering what the King would have to say to him. A ray of hope brought before his eyes the vision of Marie de Mantoua far away, and for a moment his thoughts became calmer. But all his fortune was contained in that one phrase, "please His Majesty"; and soon his reflections began to take a bitter turn.

At this moment he became aware of the presence of his friend de Thou who, uneasy at his having remained so long behind, had come to search the plain for him, and help him should he be in need of it.

"It is getting late, old friend, and the night is coming on. Where have you been all this time? I have been fearing for you. What did you stop behind for? The

King will be asking for you almost immediately. What are you thinking of ? ”

Thus did the young lawyer rapidly bombard him with questions ; anxiety for his friend had accomplished what the battle could not do, and for the moment all his calmness of manner had departed.

“ I have been slightly wounded ; I have taken a prisoner ; and I was thinking about the King. What do you think he means to do with me, de Thou ? And what ought I to do if he means to promote me near his throne ? I must manage to please him. Shall I tell you something ? I find the mere idea of such a thing makes me want to take to my heels, and I am beginning to hope already it will not happen. Is there anything more humiliating than having to *please* ? It's far worse than obeying. A soldier risks his life and that is all. But the things a courtier has to do ! The way he has to sacrifice his character, and compound with his own conscience ! To be cunning at all costs ! The degradation of it all ! My dear de Thou ! I was not made for Court life. I have only seen a little bit of it, but I know it is too true. There is something wild, deep within me, that education may polish, but never quite efface. It seemed good to me from afar to live in this world of glittering power, and I even longed for it, as the goal of all my dearest plans ; but the very first step has made me shudder ; the sight of the Cardinal frightens me ; I was present at the latest of his atrocities, and it has made me so that I cannot speak to him. I never shall be able to ; he fills me with horror. And in some strange way the royal favour also horrifies me, as though it would one day bring me to destruction.”

“ I am glad to see you frightened in this way ; it is probably the best thing for you,” replied de Thou, as he walked by his side ; “ for you are about to be brought face to face with Power ; not only to feel it, but to touch it ; you will learn what it is in very truth, and behold the hand that wields the thunder-bolt. Heaven send that it may not scorch you ! You will probably be

present at Councils that determine the destinies of nations ; you will see—and maybe even help create—the whims and fancies that give birth to bloody wars, with their conquests and their treaties ; and in your hand will lie the drop of water from which a river is created. You need to be up on the heights, my dear boy, to appreciate humanity as it really is. That is the only angle from which you can ever come to know the smallness and the pettiness of those whom we are pleased to call the great ones of the earth.”

“ Ah, and if I ever do get there, at least I shall profit by your words ! But this Cardinal—the very man I am indebted to—whom I know too well already by the work of his hand—what will he be to me ? ”

“ A friend and protector, no doubt,” responded de Thou.

“ I had rather be dead a thousand times than a friend of his. His whole being—his very name even—fills me with hatred. He sheds the blood of his fellow creatures in the Saviour’s name.”

“ My dear Henry, what are these dreadful statements you are making ? It will be your ruin if the King comes to know of your attitude towards the Cardinal.”

“ Never mind ; in the midst of all these crooked paths, there is always one straight one, and I will take it. I will tell His Majesty my every thought—the thoughts of an honest man—should he be pleased to question me, even if it were to cost me my head. I have seen this Monarch now, whom I was taught to think so feeble ; I have seen him, and his presence touched my heart in spite of myself ; truly, he is a most miserable man, but a cruel one he cannot be, and he would hear the truth from my lips. . . .”

“ Yes, but he could never make it triumph,” declared de Thou in all his wisdom. “ Beware of those warm-hearted impulses that are so prone to get you into trouble. And never attack a colossus like Richelieu without having first taken his measure.”

“ There you go again ! Just like my old tutor, Abbé

Quillét. But you neither of you know me in the least. You have no idea how tired I have grown of myself as I am, and the new direction my thoughts have taken. I must absolutely succeed or die."

"What? Ambitious already?" cried de Thou, in the utmost surprise.

His friend clasped his chin in his hands, letting the reins fall loose upon his horse's neck, and made no reply.

"You, an elderly egoist, Henri, at twenty? Ambition is the most tragic of all man's hopes."

"All the same, for the moment, it possesses my entire soul, and without it I cannot exist. My whole heart is full of it."

"My poor dear Cinq-Mars, I have ceased to recognise you! How different you used to be from this! I cannot conceal it from you; you seem to have deteriorated sadly; all those walks of our boyhood's days, when the life, and above all the death, of Socrates, used to fill our eyes with tears of envy and admiration; when virtue was our only thought, and we desired nothing better from the future than those sublime misfortunes which go to make the greatest men! How we would conjure up for ourselves imaginary schemes of sacrifice and pure devotion! If a human voice had once pronounced the word 'ambition' to us, we should have recoiled as at a serpent's sting . . ."

So spoke de Thou, with all the ardour of enthusiasm and reproach. Cinq-Mars continued on his way without replying, his head still sunk in his hands; a moment afterwards he looked up, and his eyes shining with the better kind of tears, he shook his old friend's hand, crying out to him from the bottom of his heart:

"Monsieur de Thou, you have recalled to me all the best thoughts I ever had; try not to think I have deteriorated; I am devoured by a secret hope that I cannot confide even to you; I despise as much as you do the ambition which seems to possess my soul. The world respects it, but what is that to me? As for you, my dear old friend, promise me that whatever I may do,

you will not think lightly of me. I swear to you by all that is holy, that my thoughts are free from evil."

"Very good," was de Thou's reply; "and by the same oath I swear to my belief in you. You have given me life again."

Once again their hands met in a grasp of mutual affection and good-will, and the next moment they realised that they had practically reached the royal tent.

Night had already fallen, only to be superseded by a light more mellow than that of day, for the moon had risen out of the sea in all her splendour; not a cloud could be seen in the transparent Southern sky, now blue, and studded with silver stars; while through the sultry atmosphere a fresh breath from the Mediterranean crept at rare intervals across the silent earth. The camp was outlined by the lights of tents, beneath which slumbered its worn-out soldiers, while sleep seemed also to have settled on the beleaguered city, where all was dark, save for the arms of sentinels, gleaming in the moonlight as they passed along the ramparts, or the occasional flare of the guards as they made their nightly rounds, with cries from time to time portraying their ceaseless watch.

But around the King a state of wakefulness prevailed—at least from a respectful distance. The Monarch had dismissed his attendants; alone he walked up and down in front of his tent, stopping now and again to contemplate the beauty of the heavens, and plunged, apparently, in mournful meditations. No one dared to interrupt him, and the remaining courtiers had gathered around the Cardinal, who, twenty paces from his Sovereign, was seated upon a little hillock of grass that his soldiers had transformed into a seat; worn-out by the cares of the day, and the unaccustomed weight of armour, he wiped his tired brow, and politely, though briefly, returned the salutations of those preparing to withdraw from his presence, till none remained but Joseph, standing close by and talking to Laubardemont. The Cardinal was glancing in the King's direction, to see whether the latter would not speak to him again before retiring for

the night, when the noise of horses drew near, and Cinq-Mars appeared. After being questioned by the Cardinal's guards, he was allowed to proceed alone, with the exception of de Thou.

"You have arrived too late, young man, for an audience with the King," said the Cardinal, in a tone of sharp reprimand. "His Majesty is not accustomed to being kept waiting."

The two friends were about to retreat, when the voice of Louis himself was heard. The unhappy Monarch was, at this moment, in one of those false positions which so often made his life a burden. Profoundly incensed against his minister, but quite aware that the day's success was due to him, desiring, moreover, to announce his intention of leaving the army and raising the siege of Perpignan, he was divided between his desire for an interview, and his fear of weakening in his displeasure. The minister, on his side, dared not be the one to address him first, being uncertain as to the thoughts inside his master's brain, and fearful of choosing an inauspicious moment. None the less, he found himself unable to withdraw, and both were placed in a position precisely similar to that of two lovers, having quarrelled, and anxious of an opportunity to make it up. The King now seized on the first one that presented itself, and emerged from his tent. Chance was against the minister this time. On such slight threads as these hang the destinies of earth's great men.

"Is that not M. Cinq-Mars?" enquired the King in a loud voice. "Let him enter. I have been awaiting him."

Young d'Effiat drew near, still on horseback, and tried to dismount a few paces from the King, but scarcely had he put his leg to the ground when he collapsed.

"Forgive me, Sire, I believe I am wounded." The blood meanwhile was running out of his boot. De Thou had seen him fall and drawn near to assist him, and Richelieu seized the opportunity of hurrying forward in simulated agitation.

"Remove this spectacle from His Majesty," he cried. "Can you not see this young man is mortally hit?"

"Do nothing of the kind," ordered Louis, while he helped to hold the wounded boy in his arms. "The King of France is not afraid to witness death, nor of the blood which is spilled in his service. I am interested in this young man. See that he is carried near to my tent and is attended by my surgeons; if his wound is not too serious he will return with me to Paris, for the siege is at an end, M. le Cardinal. I have seen enough of it. Fresh business calls me to the heart of my kingdom, and I will leave you here to command in my absence. That is what I wanted to impart to you."

With these words, the King brusquely re-entered his tent, preceded by his pages, and officers bearing torches.

The royal pavilion was now closed, and Cinq-Mars was borne away by de Thou and his servants, leaving Richelieu mutely regarding the place where this scene had occurred, with all the air of a man struck by lightning, and quite incapable either of seeing or hearing the people that surrounded him.

Laubardemont, still intimidated by his bad reception of the previous evening, dared not utter a word, and Joseph found himself hardly able to recognise his old master; for a moment he regretted having thrown in his lot with him, believing his star to be now on the wane; but reflecting on his own unpopularity with all the world, and realising Richelieu as his one resource, he seized him by the arm, and shaking him firmly, spoke roughly to him, though his voice was low:

"Come now, Monseigneur, you look like a disconsolate fowl that is caught in a storm. Come along with us."

And, with a feint of guiding him by the elbow, though in reality dragging him along willy nilly, with the help of Laubardemont he forced him to enter his tent, much as a schoolmaster drags off a pupil to bed, to prevent him being harmed by the evening mists. The prematurely aged man slowly yielded to the will of his two satellites, and the purple hangings of his tent closed around him.

CHAPTER XII

THE NIGHT-WATCH

SCARCELY had the Cardinal entered his tent than he collapsed, armed as he was, into the nearest chair, and there remained, his handkerchief to his mouth, and his eyes fixed on space, leaving his two confidants pondering whether this attitude were one of contemplation or exhaustion. His face was pale as death, and his forehead moist with icy perspiration; with a brusque gesture, in order to dry it, he pushed aside his red skull cap, sole token of his clerical attire, and his face sank between his hands. The monk and the sombre man of law remained standing, one on either side, silently gazing down on him, the one in black, the other in brown, looking for all the world like the priest and the notary in attendance on a dying man.

The monk was the first to speak, in a hollow-sounding voice, more proper to recite the offices of the dead than to offer consolation.

"If Monseigneur will only call to mind the advice I gave him at Narbonne, he will realise how justly I apprehended the trouble this young man would one day cause him."

To which the Inquisitor added:

"I heard through the old deaf Abbé who was dining at the house of the Maréchale d'Effiat, that this young Cinq-Mars had a great deal more spirit than was usually supposed, and that he endeavoured to rescue the Marshal de Bassompierre. I have a detailed report from this deaf priest, who played his part most creditably; Your Eminence has every reason to be satisfied with him."

"I have already warned Monseigneur," resumed Joseph—for these two rascally knaves divided the burden between them in a manner worthy of Virgil himself—"that he would be well advised to get rid of young d'Effiat, and that I would see to it for him if such was his

desire. It would be quite easy to draft him into the Royal Brotherhood."

"It would be easier still to ensure that he dies of his wound," replied Laubardemont. "If His Highness would be so good as to honour me with his instructions, I am acquainted with the Second Surgeon of the Royal Household, who has just healed a blow which I received on my forehead. A most prudent gentleman, entirely devoted to the interests of the Cardinal Duke, and suffering most opportunely just now from a run of ill-luck at cards."

"I should imagine," observed Joseph, modestly, though not without a certain bitterness creeping into his tone, "that if His Eminence were in need of someone to execute his commands, he would naturally select his usual agent, who has conducted these affairs hitherto, not without a certain amount of success."

"Though I could name one or two of fairly recent date," murmured Laubardemont, "which presented certain difficulties."

"Ah, no doubt," said the priest, with a half-mocking gesture of respect, "your most successful achievement has proved to be the condemnation of Urbain Grandier, the sorcerer. But, with God's help, there have been other efforts, equally deserving of respect. It was surely not wholly undeserving of praise"—and here he cast down his eyes like any bashful maiden—"finally to extirpate a certain branch of the House of Bourbon."

"It certainly should not have been very difficult," retorted the magistrate acidly, "to select a soldier from the Guards to kill the Comte de Soissons; whereas, to conduct a trial——"

"And turn executioner one's self," broke in the monk heatedly, "is certainly less hard than to educate another, from boyhood upwards, with the thought of being one day worthy to perform a great action, and to endure, if need be, every form of torture, rather than to reveal the names of those who have charged him with his mission; or else to die boldly on the body of his victim; for that

is what my pupil did : perishing on his opponent's sword, without one cry ; the ending of a saint ; I had taught him myself."

" It is one thing to teach others to run into danger ; another to incur it one's self."

" And what about the siege of La Rochelle, and all the risks I then incurred ? "

" Risk ? Of being drowned in a puddle ? No doubt ! " was the other's reply.

" And you," retorted Joseph, " have your own fingers ever been involved in your instruments of torture ? And all because the Ursuline abbess happens to be your own niece."

" It fell to the brothers of St. Francis to wield the hammers ; as for me I received a blow on the forehead from that very same Cinq-Mars, who was inciting the mob to anger."

" Are you sure of that ? " exclaimed Joseph delightedly. " Dare he so resist the orders of the King ? " Such was the joy of this discovery that his anger melted away.

" Impertinent scoundrels ! " cried the Cardinal, suddenly breaking silence, and removing his blood-stained handkerchief from his lips, " these blood-thirsty disputes of yours would soon meet with their deserts, had they not already revealed to me so many of your infamous secrets. You have exceeded my instructions ; I had no desire for torture, Laubardemont ; that is the second blunder you have made in my service ; you will cause me to be universally hated, and all to no purpose. As for you, Joseph, bear in mind these details concerning Cinq-Mars's part in the riot ; they may be useful later on."

" I have all their names and descriptions," the secret servant of the law assured him, bowing low before his master's chair, a servile smile on his thin brown face.

" Very good," replied the Minister, in a deprecatory tone ; " we need not go into that at present. Joseph, you must hasten back to Paris in order to arrive before

this young upstart, who, I feel sure, is going to be a royal favourite. Worm your way into his confidence : either he is your friend or he perishes. Above all, keep me informed each day, by faithful messengers—by word of mouth, remember, never in writing. I am very displeased with you, Joseph, for the miserable messenger you have chosen for this Cologne affair ! He completely misunderstood my instructions, and by seeing the King prematurely, involved us in dangerous disgrace ! You might have ruined me entirely. Go and make your investigations in Paris now ; there will shortly be another conspiracy there against me, but it will be the last of them. I shall remain here, that they may be left free to act. Leave me now, and send me my valet two hours later to attend me. Not before. I wish to be alone.”

The footsteps of the two men could be heard retreating, while Richelieu sat gazing at the opening of his tent, an expression of extreme irritation on his face.

“ Miserable wretches,” he exclaimed to himself. “ Just a few more secret missions on my behalf, and then I will utterly efface you, as two evil instruments fit only for the dust-heap. Soon the King will succumb to the disease which is consuming him, and then I shall be Regent, and reign sole King of France ; no longer shall I have to stand in fear of weakness and caprice ; the proud stock of this country shall be rooted out for ever ; I will destroy them hip and thigh. Before me they shall bow and tremble . . . all Europe shall . . . ”

Here he was forced once again to apply his handkerchief to his mouth.

“ What am I saying ? Unhappy man that I am ! Death is before my eyes ; this miserable body of mine is doomed to destruction, while my mind still thirsts for achievement ! What achievement ? And to what end ? Glory ? An empty phrase. Human-kind ? I despise them. What is the purpose of it all, since at the end of two, or three years at the most, I shall myself be dead ? Is it in God’s service ? That name upon my lips ! I

have not walked within His paths, and none the less His eye beholds my every deed ! ”

His head sank forward on his chest, and his glance now fell on the large gold crucifix he wore around his neck ; involuntarily he sank back into his chair, but still the sight of it pursued him, and now he took it in his hands, and regarded it with a strange and tortured look.

“ Terrible symbol ! ” he whispered to himself. “ Still you follow me ! Shall I never get away from you . . . godhead . . . and martyrdom. . . . What am I ? What have I done ? ”

For the first time he was seized with a terror hitherto unknown to him ; strange shudderings took possession of his body ; he dared not raise his eyes, for fear of encountering some terrifying vision ; he dared not call out, from fear of his own voice ; there he sat, completely gripped by the sudden thought of eternity—for him, the most terrible of all thoughts—and a kind of prayer escaped him :

“ God in Heaven, judge me as Thou wilt, but condemn me not apart from other men ! Behold me surrounded by the men of my own time ; consider the mighty work that I have done. A mighty weight requires a mighty weapon ; and should the weapon crush beneath it in its fall a few miserable beings of no account, am I to blame ? I shall seem wicked in the sight of men, but wilt Thou, the Supreme Judge of all things, see me with their eyes ? No, for Thou dost know it is the force of power that makes man guilty to his fellow man ; it is the First Minister that wields destruction, not Armand de Richelieu ! Do his motives spring from personal grievances ? Never ! They are the result of a system that has to be ! But does it have to be ? What if I have played with human fortunes, and treated men as ciphers, to grasp at nothing but a wraith ? I have shaped the royal power according to my will. What if, for all my wisdom, I have encompassed nothing but its ruin ? My borrowed plumes of glory have seduced me after all ! Oh ! tortured labyrinth

of all weak human thought ! Oh ! simple faith ! Why have I strayed out of your paths ? Why could I not remain a simple priest ? Could I but now have the courage to break with men and give myself to God, perchance the ladder of Jacob would yet again descend into my dreams . . . ! ”

At this moment a confused noise was heard outside his tent : the laughter of soldiers, mingled with oaths and cries ; and in the midst of it all one clear and feeble voice. So might an angel sound, striving to make itself heard through demons' laughter. The Cardinal rose and opened a little window in one of the canvas walls. The sight he saw was sufficiently strange to make him pause and listen.

“ See here, La Valeur,” called out one soldier to another, “ the girl has started off again with her singing and her jabbering ; bring her up to the fire here, and put her in the middle of us.”

“ You know nothing about it,” exclaimed another voice. “ Grand Ferré here tells me he has known her before.”

“ Know her ? Take my word for it I do ! Didn't I see her when I was home on leave, in my own village ; and a very pretty scene it was too, only not the sort of thing to be talked about here—especially among good Cardinal's men.”

“ And why shouldn't we talk about it, my good simpleton ? ” demanded an old campaigner, twirling his moustache.

“ Because it isn't wise to play with fire. That's why. Understand ? ”

“ No—I don't understand.”

“ Good for you. Nor do I. But that's what the townsfolk told me.”

A burst of laughter interrupted him at this point.

“ Listen to the idiot ! He's been listening to what the townsfolk say ! ”

“ If you listen to their chattering you must have a pretty deal of time on your hands,” declared a soldier.

"Do you know what my mother once said to me, young greenhorn?" enquired an old fellow gravely, with a fierce and solemn stare in his direction, intended to command his utmost attention.

"How should I know, old fool? Your mother must have been dead of old age before my grandfather ever saw the light!"

"Very well, my new-born lamb, then I will tell you! You must know that my mother was a respectable woman from Bohemia, attached to a regiment of skirmishers, whom she used to follow around with her brandy bottle about her neck, and drink with the best of them; she had fourteen husbands in her time, all soldiers, and all killed in battle."

"There's a woman for you!" chorused the soldiers, in tones of the most profound respect.

"And never in her life did she speak one word to a mere civilian, unless to say, 'Light me my candle' or 'Heat up my soup,' as she moved on to a new place."

"Well, and what did this mother of yours tell you?" enquired Grand Ferré.

"If you are in such a hurry you shall go without knowing it, my lad. Over and over again she used to say: 'A soldier's life is worth more than a dog's; but a dog's is worth more than a civilian's!'"

"Bravo! Bravo! There's a proverb for you!" roared out his audience, overcome by these sapient remarks.

"All the same," retorted Grand Ferré, "there was something in what those townsfolk said; besides, they were not ordinary citizens, for they carried swords by their sides, a lot of them, and they were furious at the burning of their priest. And so was I too."

"And what if they did burn your priest, my innocent young babe?" enquired a sergeant, leaning on his musket; "as good burn him as anyone else. Though, for that matter, they might just as well have chosen one of our own generals here, for all of them are priests these days! As a good Royalist, I tell you——"

" You hold your peace," cried out the old man, " and let this young woman go on talking ! It's just like you dogs of Royalists to come and disturb us when there's some fun afoot ! "

" What is that you say ? " shouted Grand Ferré. " What do you know about Royalists, old nincompoop that you are ? "

" I know as much about Royalists as I want to know," retorted La Pipe stoutly. " You are all for the Princes of the Peace, and against the Cardinal and all his taxes ! Am I right ? "

" No, you are not, Old Red Stockings ! A Royalist is a King's man. That is what a Royalist is ! And as my father was the King's own Keeper of Hawks, I am a Royalist too ! And I hate all Red Stockings ! So there ! "

" Come, come, none of your quarrelling when we might be enjoying our sport," the other soldiers broke in.

The noisy group were gathered together around a large fire, brighter even than the light of the moon in all her glory, while in their midst stood the object of their dispute. To the Cardinal's astonished gaze was revealed a young woman, clad all in black, with a long white veil around her. Her feet were bare ; a rough cord encircled her slender waist, a rosary was suspended from her neck, almost to the length of her feet, the beads of which she twisted rapidly in her long white fingers. The soldiers, with all their love of horse-play, had amused themselves by placing little lumps of burning coal along the pathway that her feet must tread. The old man now approached the hem of her robe with his tinder piece, saying as he did so, in his raucous voice :

" Now, my beauty, get on with your story, or I will fill you up with powder and blow you sky high like a mine ; and mark my words, it would not be the first time ! It was an old trick of ours in the days of the Huguenots ! Pipe up now ! "

The girl regarded them gravely, and without uttering a word, lowered her veil.

"That's not the way!" exclaimed Grand Ferré, with a drunken laugh. "You only know how to make a woman cry; you know nothing of the language of the heart! Wait till I speak to her!"

And, taking her by the chin, "Now, my little pretty," said he, "tell us the end of that little tale you were telling to these gentlemen just now. And then we will float together on the tender sea of love, as our fine ladies in Paris say, and you can take a glass of brandy with this faithful knight of yours, who met you a little time ago in Loudon, when you made a show of yourself the day the poor devil of a priest was burned. . . ."

The girl folded her arms, looking around her with an air of command, as she cried:

"Be gone, all of you, in the name of the Lord of Hosts! Wicked men, leave me in peace! Between you and me there is a great gulf fixed! We do not speak each other's language. Go—sell your blood by the day to the Princes of this world, and leave me alone to accomplish my mission. Lead me to the Cardinal!"

A roar of laughter interrupted her.

"Do you suppose," demanded a sharpshooter, "that our General the Cardinal would receive you like that, with your bare feet? Go and wash them first!"

"Our Lord has said: 'Jerusalem, gird up thy loins,' " she replied, making the sign of the Cross. "Take me to the Cardinal!"

Whereupon Richelieu cried in a loud voice:

"Bring that woman to me, and cease to molest her!"

In a dead silence the girl was led up to the Minister.

"But why," she cried, as she became aware of the figure before her, "have you brought me before a soldier?"

Without a word they withdrew, leaving her alone with the Cardinal. The latter looked at her suspiciously.

"Madame," said he, "what are you doing in the camp at this hour of night? And why do you go barefooted, like a girl taken leave of her senses?"

"A vow! Just a vow!" cried the young nun

impatiently, seating herself abruptly at his side. "I have also vowed to eat no food till I have found the man I seek."

"My sister," replied the astonished Cardinal, relenting somewhat as he observed her more closely, "God does not exact such penance from the feeble body of a woman, especially from one your age, for you seem to me to be extremely young."

"Young? Ah . . . maybe a few days ago I was very young . . . but since then I have passed through two lives at the very least. So much have I thought, and so much have I suffered. . . Look!"

And she lifted the veil from her beautiful face. Her magnificent black eyes were still full of animation; but for them, her features resembled those of a ghost so pale was she; her lips were blue and trembling; you could even hear the sound of her chattering teeth.

"You are ill, my child," said the minister, moved to compassion. He took her hand, and felt it hot within his own, while her pulse was beating with the burning rage of fever.

"Why," he continued, with increasing interest, "you are trying to kill yourself with hardships beyond human endurance; it is a practice I have always condemned, especially among young people. Who has been making you do this? Is that the secret you have come here to confide in me? Speak without any fear, and be sure that I will help you."

"Confide my secrets to a man?" cried out the girl. "Never! They have all betrayed me—all! I will confide in no one—not even in M. Cinq-Mars, although he is destined for an early death!"

"What!" exclaimed Richelieu, with a frown and a bitter laugh. "What? You, too, know that young man? Is he the cause of your trouble?"

"Oh no! He is too good; he hates all wicked men, and that is why he will die so young. Besides"—and now a hard and savage note was heard to creep into her voice—"men are all weak, and there are certain

things that only a woman can perform. When no strong man was left in Israel, Deborah arose ! ”

“ What ? Who told you all these things ? ” questioned the Cardinal, still with her hand in his.

“ I cannot tell you that,” she answered, with an air of childish simplicity, speaking in her soft nun’s voice, “ for you would never understand. It was the demon who taught me everything before he ruined me.”

“ Ah, my child, he ruins us all in the end, and he is a very bad instructor,” said Richelieu, in a fatherly tone of increasing pity. “ What are these sins of yours ? Confide in me. I can do a lot to help you.”

“ Ah,” said she, regarding him doubtfully, “ to help soldiers, no doubt, and brave and generous men like that ; beneath your breastplate I am sure a noble heart must beat ; for you are an old general, and can know nothing of the wiles of crime.”

Richelieu smiled. This depreciation of his virtues was most flattering.

“ I heard you asking for the Cardinal just now. What is it you want with him ? What do you seek him for ? ”

The nun thought a moment, then rapped her forehead with her finger. “ I do not know,” she said ; “ your words have driven it out of my head . . . I had an idea . . . a great idea . . . and now I have lost it . . . it was for that I had vowed to starve . . . and I must accomplish it before I die. Ah ! ”—and she placed her hand within her robe, upon her breast, as though she carried something there—“ I have it ! My idea ! ”

She flushed all of a sudden, and her eyes were opened wide, as she leaned over and whispered into the Cardinal’s ear :

“ Listen, and I will tell you. Urbain Grandier, the man I loved, told me this night that it was Richelieu who had ruined him. I stole a knife from an inn, and I have come here to kill him. Tell me where he is.”

The Cardinal, alarmed, and completely taken by surprise, recoiled in horror. He dared not call his Guards, fearing the cries of the girl, and the accusations

she might make. And yet one mad impulse on her part might prove his death.

"Am I never to be free from his horrible story?" he exclaimed, looking her firmly in the face, and trying to decide on what action he had better take. The two remained gazing at one another, much the same as two wrestlers before they come to grips.

Meanwhile Laubardemont and Joseph had gone out together, and before separating, had a few moments' conversation before the Cardinal's tent, in which each was bent on fooling the other. Their recent quarrel had increased their mutual hatred a thousandfold, and each was resolved to ruin his rival in the eyes of his master. The judge was the first to speak:

"Ah, reverend father! how it grieves me that my thoughtless words of a few moments ago should have caused you such offence!"

"My worthy sir, please dismiss such an idea entirely from your mind! Charity, charity at all costs! Where should we be without it? Sometimes I get a little carried away where the interests of the Cardinal and State are concerned, but such is my devotion, that I know you will understand."

"Who better than I, reverend father? But you must allow me credit for a little of the same feeling, for there is nothing that I do not owe to His Eminence. Alas! I fear in my zeal to serve him I have overshot the mark. Hence his reproaches!"

"Rest assured," said Joseph, "he wishes you no harm. He knows what it is to have a weakness for one's own family."

"Oh, as to that," replied Laubardemont, "that is entirely my affair, and my niece would have been ruined utterly, with all her convent too, had Urbain Grandier triumphed; the more so as she was slow to understand what was wanted of her, and when she had to appear, behaved like a child."

"Did she indeed? For all the world to see? That must have gone hard with you!"

"Harder than you can imagine. She forgot everything we had taught her under the spell, and made all sorts of mistakes in the Latin we had given her to say; while the very day of the trial she must needs go and make a most distressing scene—fainting and crying—a most disagreeable business for myself and all the judges! I can assure you she would have had a bad time from me, if I had not had to leave the town so suddenly! All the same, it is natural I consider her, for she is now my only relative. My son has turned out badly, and I have heard nothing of him for these past four years. Poor little Jeanne de Belfiel! To think it was all on that rascal's account I made her take the veil! If I had only known the sort of scamp he was, I should have kept her in the world!"

"I hear she is extremely beautiful," answered Joseph. "A valuable possession to have in any family; you could have introduced her to the Court, and the King . . . well, well . . . you know what I mean . . . it might not be too late, even now!"

"Ah! Who but you would have thought of that, *Monseigneur*! Forgive the title, but we all know you are a candidate for the Cardinal's hat! How good of you not to forget the devotion of your old friends . . .!"

Thus did Laubardemont speak to Joseph as they traversed the end of the street which led to the camp quarters of the volunteers.

"May God and His Holy Mother keep you while I am away," said Joseph, pausing to take farewell. "I shall have started to-morrow for Paris, and as I shall have a considerable amount to do with this little Cinq-Mars, I will just go and have a look at him and enquire about his wound."

"If my advice had been followed," said Laubardemont, "your trouble would have been spared."

"You are right there," replied Joseph, raising his eyes to Heaven with a deep sigh; "but the Cardinal is not the man he was; he no longer responds to the best ideas, and we shall all be lost if he goes on in this manner."

And with a profound bow to the judge, the monk departed on his way.

Laubardemont followed him for some moments with his eyes, and not till he was quite certain of the direction he had taken did he retrace his own steps, moving swiftly towards the minister's tent.

"The Cardinal is sending him away," he reasoned within himself; "that means he is tired of him. I know secrets which will bring about his downfall. Added to which I will say he has gone off to Paris to pay his court to the coming favourite; I will take the place of this monk in the Cardinal's favour. The time is propitious; it is not yet past midnight and he will be alone yet for another hour and a half. Hurry." And he hastened to the Guards' tent before the pavilion.

"Monseigneur is engaged," said the Captain, after a little hesitation. "You cannot go in."

"Nonsense. You saw me come out of his tent an hour ago; things have happened which I have to report on."

"Come in, Laubardemont," cried out the voice of Richelieu. "Come in quickly—and alone!"

He entered. The Cardinal, still seated, was holding both hands of a young nun in one of his own, while with the other he signed to his astonished agent to keep silence. The latter remained immovable, not yet having seen the woman's face; she was talking rapidly, and the curious things she was saying afforded the most startling contrast to the softness of her voice. Richelieu's perturbation was evident.

"Yes, I shall stab him with a knife—the knife the demon told me to take at the inn. The nail of Sisera. See, the knife has an ivory handle, and I have wept over it many a time. Is it not strange, good general? I shall plunge it into the throat of the man who has killed my friend—just as he told me himself to do. And then I shall burn the body. It is the law of retaliation—the law that God permitted to Adam . . . I seem to astonish you, good soldier . . . but you would be more astonished

still if I were to sing you his song—the song that he sings to me in the evenings, when he appears to me at the time of his execution—you remember? When the tears run down his face and my hands begin to burn as they are burning now. And always he cries to me: ‘They sinned, those men robed in scarlet . . . they sinned, every one of them! I have twelve demons who are my servants, and I shall come again and visit you when the bell sounds . . . on a throne of purple velvet, with torches, torches of resin, that burn . . . ah, how beautifully they burn!’ And this is what he sings:”

And with all the air of a *de profundis* she sang the following words:

“ They have made me a monarch in hell,
The priest whom you loved so well.
I sit on a throne of a burning blue
Clad in bright robes of a sulphur hue;
And to-morrow I come to claim my bride,
To be with me for ever and reign by my side!

“ Strange, is it not, general? And every evening I reply to him. Listen! Listen well:

“ The judges have spoken where they stand,
And they have led me by the hand;
Behold me kneeling at thy feet!
The night is cold, as cold can be,
But I will bear thee company,
And thou shalt have my winding sheet!

“ And then he speaks, like all the wise men and the prophets together. And this is what he says: ‘Woe, woe upon earth to the shedders of blood! Are they gods, these judges of men? Nay, they are mortal men themselves, who suffer and grow old, and still they dare to lift their voice and cry: ‘Destroy that man! To the scaffold with him! What man has any right to use those words to a fellow creature? Will it be number two? Number one will be the assassin—you will see! Count carefully—one—two—three—how wise and just they are, these grave-old men, paid to work their will

upon mankind. The crime of it ! Heaven blushes at the sight ! Could you see them as I do, Jeanne, here up above, your face would grow even paler than it is ! That flesh should kill flesh, and that which lives by blood should cause more blood to flow ! In calmness, not in anger ! Are they themselves Gods to create ! ' "

The girl's cries as she uttered these words in feverish haste, so terrified Richelieu and Laubardemont, that for some moments they remained paralysed. Meanwhile her delirium increased :

" Urbain has told me—not once did they quiver ! To condemn a man without one shudder ! A just man sent to death ! Torture ! They pulled his limbs asunder to make him speak ! His skin was torn like a piece of torn parchment ! His nerves all raw and bleeding for the world to see ! You could hear his bones ! You could hear them crack ! But the judges were sleeping—dreaming their dreams of flowers and spring-time. ' How hot this hall is,' said one of them as he rose to his feet. . . ' Is this man never going to speak ! Is the torture nearly over ? ' And at last, in pity, they lead him out to die ! To die ! Man's eternal terror—death ! An unknown world ! And into it they send a living soul, a living soul ; there in fury to await his judges ! Does the thought of vengeance never rise before them ? Do they never see me before their eyes, at night time, when they lie down to sleep ? "

But the Cardinal, consumed with pity as well as horror, and exhausted beyond endurance, cried out :

" In Heaven's name, put an end to this hideous scene ! Remove this woman ! She is mad ! "

The frantic girl turned round, and immediately recognised Laubardemont. " The judge ! The judge ! " Her screams rang through the tent.

Laubardemont, terrified, clasped his hands before the Cardinal and cried :

" Alas, monseigneur ! I implore your forgiveness ! It is my niece, who is out of her wits ! I had no idea of it, or she should long ago have been confined. Jeanne—

Jeanne—on your knees, girl ! Ask pardon of the Cardinal Duke ! ”

“ Richelieu ! ” she cried. And, suddenly, astonishment seemed to deprive her of all strength. The flush on her cheeks gave place to a deadly pallor, her cries were stilled, and her wild gaze fixed itself with terrifying intensity upon the nerve-shattered Cardinal.

“ Remove that poor child from my sight immediately,” he cried. “ She is dying, and so, I think, am I. With all the horrors that have pursued me since that unfortunate trial, I am a soul in hell ! ”

He rose as he spoke. But Jeanne de Belfiel still stood before him, with haggard eyes and open mouth, her head bent forward, as though the shock of surprise had paralysed her every movement. At the Cardinal's gesture she started, at seeing herself suddenly between him and Laubardemont ; her gaze turned from one to the other, and the knife fell from her hand, while slowly she made her way towards the entrance of the tent, wrapping her veil closely around her. Her eyes turned with a backward look of horror on her uncle, following her, as a terrified sheep will scent the breath upon its neck of the devouring wolf already at its heels.

And so the two went out together. No sooner had they left the tent, than the furious judge seized the two hands of his victim, bound them together with a handkerchief, and led her away with the utmost ease, for the girl uttered not one sound or sigh, but followed where he lead her, with head sunk upon her breast as a figure walking in a dream.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SPANIARD

MEANWHILE a scene of a very different nature was taking place in Cinq-Mars's tent. The King's healing words had been followed promptly by the more practical assistance of the royal surgeons ; a dead bullet, easily

extracted, was the sole cause of the trouble : permission was given to travel, and everything was prepared for his departure. Up to midnight the invalid had been receiving visitors, friendly and interested—the former including Gondi and de Fontrailles, who were also preparing to leave Perpignan for Paris ; with them had come the former page, Olivier d'Entraigues, to felicitate the happy volunteer on the King's favourable reception ; the monarch's habitual coldness towards all those surrounding him having made those familiar with his ways quite certain that the few words he had spoken were the presage of better things to come. Cinq-Mars was therefore the centre of congratulations.

At last he was lying alone, in his camp-bed ; by his side, sat M. de Thou, holding his hand, while Grandchamp, at his feet, continued to grumble and complain of all those visitors who kept a sick man lying awake, with a long journey before him the very next day. As for Cinq-Mars, he was enjoying one of those moments of hope and peacefulness which come at intervals to strengthen all men's souls ; his fingers secretly clutched the crucifix, hanging around his neck, while his thoughts turned to its beloved donor, whose very hand he hoped soon to be holding in his own. The counsels of the young magistrate met with no response but a glance and a smile, for the boy was already dreaming of the goal of his travels, which was also the goal of his life. Meanwhile de Thou continued, in his calm and gentle voice :

“ I shall soon follow you to Paris. I am more pleased even than you are, to see the King take you there with him ; it is the beginning of good will which you will do well to foster. I have thought much on the secret springs of your ambition, and I believe I have penetrated your motives. The feeling of love for France, which so inspired you in your early youth was bound to develop into something stronger still ; and now you wish to be near your Sovereign for the sake of serving your country, and put those boyish dreams as near as may be into

practice. A fine thought, and worthy of you ! I admire you and submit ! Approach your King with all the chivalrous devotion of your forefathers, with an open mind, ready for any sacrifice. Be ready to receive his confidence, and pave the way for that of his subjects, bind up the wounds of the people, in making their ruler aware of them, and use your good fortune for the re-establishment of love between a father and his children—a love that was broken eighteen years ago by a man with a heart harder than marble ; brave the vengeance of such a man, with all its terrors, for the sake of such a noble cause, and brave again the calumnies and lies that pursue the favourite even to the very footsteps of the throne. Such a dream was worthy of your nature. Follow it up, my boy, with a bold heart ; speak freely to the King of the merits and misfortunes of his true friends, oppressed and trampled on ; tell him fearlessly how his own nobility have never conspired against his name, but only against his Minister ; tell him how the old French families are as noble as his own, that in striking them he strikes at all his nation ; that if once they go, he alone will be the first to suffer, exposed to all the winds of circumstance, as the oak tree bows beneath the storm, alone in all its glory, when the forest has succumbed beneath the axe. Indeed, indeed," went on de Thou, becoming more and more animated, " this is a fine and noble purpose. Walk in the path you have chosen, with footsteps that will not falter, learn to control that secret shame which all noble souls must feel before they stoop to flattery, and pay what the world is pleased to call its *court* ! For kings—alas !—are used to terms of hollow admiration ; regard it as a strange new language to be learned ; words that your lips have never yet been taught to frame, but which—believe me—can be nobly spoken, and still be full of fine and generous thought."

Cinq-Mars, during this ardent harangue on the part of his friend, was unable to prevent himself from blushing

suddenly, and turned his head on his pillow to the other side of the tent, so as to be less easily seen. De Thou stopped.

"Henri, what is it? Why do you not answer? Am I mistaken in you, after all?"

Cinq-Mars sighed deeply and made no reply.

"Have you not, as I think, been carried away by some such thoughts as these?"

The wounded boy looked at his friend more calmly now as he replied:

"I was hoping, my dear de Thou, that you would cease to question me, and continue blindly to believe in me. What evil genius must needs impel you thus to probe my soul? I am no stranger to these thoughts of yours. Who dares to say that I have never harboured them? Who dares deny that I had formed the resolution to translate them into action, further even than you had dared to do in speech? My gods are thy gods—love of France, righteous hatred of the ambitious being who uses the axe and the scaffold to oppress her and her ancient ways, and firm belief that virtue may yet be proved as good as crime. We think the same about these things. But when you see a man kneeling in a Church, do you demand the name of the patron saint to whom he prays? What is it to you, provided that he bows before the same altar as your own, and dies for it if need be? When our fathers walked bare-footed to the Holy Sepulchre, staff in hand, were they forced to declare the nature of the vows that took them to the Holy Land? They fought and died, and their fellow men—and maybe God as well—asked nothing more; the pious Captain who led them thither did not order their bodies to be stripped, to see whether their hair shirt and red cross did not conceal some other more mysterious sign; and no doubt they were not judged more hardly up above, for having fortified their resolutions when on earth, by some sort of hope permitted to every Christian, some second secret thought, more human and less remote to earthly minds."

De Thou smiled and reddened slightly as he lowered his eyes.

"My good friend," he replied gravely, "this excitement is bad for you. We will close the subject now, and do not let us continue to mingle God and Heaven in our discourse, for no good will come of it. Draw your blanket up over your shoulders, for it is going to be cold to-night. And I promise you," he added, attending to the sick boy with all the solicitude of a mother, "I promise you I will not annoy you any more with my advice."

"Ah," exclaimed Cinq-Mars, in spite of the silence imposed on him, "I swear to you, by this golden cross that you see, and in the name of holy Saint Marie, to die rather than abandon the project you have sketched out for me. The day will one day come, perhaps, when you will even implore me to stop; but then it will be too late."

"Good . . . good . . . now go to sleep," repeated his counsellor, "and if you cannot or will not stop, then I will go with you wherever it may lead us."

He took a small book of hours from his pocket, and began to read attentively; a moment later he looked again at Cinq-Mars, who was still awake, and signed to Grandchamp to change the position of the lamp; but even this did not bring sleep to the invalid; instead, he tossed upon his bed with eyes wide open.

"You are still over-excited," said de Thou with a smile at him. "I will read you something that will set your mind at rest. Ah, Henri, it is in this little book that our real peace of mind is to be found. Open it where you will, and in it you will find man, in that state of mind best suited to his frailty: prayer and the uncertainty of his fate on the one hand, and on the other God, comforting him in his weakness. The noblest spectacle in all the world—this chain that links up Heaven to earth. Life, Death, and Eternity are all inside this book; open it where you will."

"Ah, yes," exclaimed Cinq-Mars, sitting up quickly

with a look of childish excitement in his eyes. "I will open it. Give it to me. You know the old superstition in our country? He who opens a prayer book with his sword, will find his destiny written on the left-hand page, and the first to enter afterwards will strongly influence the reader's fate!"

"What childish stuff! But do it if you will. Here is your sword. Take the point . . . see, here it is."

"Let me read it myself," said Cinq-Mars, taking the book on the edge of his bed. Grandchamp stood at the foot listening gravely, his sun-burned head with its grey locks leaning forward to catch every word. His master stopped abruptly at the end of the first sentence, then continued with a smile that might have been a little forced:

- I. Then did they appear in the city of Mediolanum.
- II. The High Priest said unto them: "Bow down to our gods and worship them."
- III. And the people were silent, regarding their countenances, which appeared as the countenances of angels.
- IV. But Gervais, taking the hand of Protais, raised his eyes towards Heaven, and being filled with the Holy Spirit of God cried:
- V. "Behold, my brother, the Son of Man who smiles upon us. Let me die the first."
- VI. "For if I were to behold the shedding of your blood, I fear to shed tears unworthy of the Lord our Master."
- VII. But Protais answered him in these words:
- VIII. "It is just, my brother, that I should perish after you, for I am older and have greater strength to see you suffer."
- IX. But the rulers and the people shouted against them.
- X. And the soldiers having struck them, their heads fell both together on the same stone.
- XI. And it was in this same spot that the holy Saint Ambrose found the ashes of the two martyrs, and restored with them the sight of a blind man.

"Well, queried Cinq-Mars, looking at his friend, after he had finished. "What do you make of it?"

"The will of Heaven be done. It is not for us to probe it."

"Nor to let our plans be influenced by any such childish nonsense," replied d'Effiat impatiently, wrapping the cloak around him that had been thrown upon his bed. "Remember the verses that we used to recite together: '*Justum et tenacom propositi virum . . .*' those words of steel are engraved for ever on my brain. Let the universe crumble around me if it will, still shall my purpose remain steadfast in the ruins."

"Cease to compare the thoughts of man with those of Heaven, and let us learn to submit," replied de Thou, gravely.

"*Amen*," uttered old Grandchamp, and his eyes were filled with tears which he now wiped away brusquely.

"What has all this got to do with an old soldier like you?" his master asked him. "Why—you are crying!"

"*Amen*," sounded a nasal voice at the entrance to the tent.

"*Parbleu* Monsieur, you had better put that question to the holy father come to visit you," replied the old retainer, indicating Joseph, who advanced towards them with his arms folded on his chest.

"Ah! That man!" murmured Cinq-Mars.

"Perhaps I have come at an unpropitious time?" queried Joseph, in the softest of tones.

"At a very propitious time, on the contrary," said Henri d'Effiat, with a smile at de Thou. "What can have brought you here, holy father, at this hour of the night? Some good work, I presume?"

Joseph saw that his reception was none of the friendliest, and afraid lest his real motives should have been divined, he adopted a distant attitude instead of the friendly tone he had meant to maintain, seating himself by the side of the bed before beginning to speak:

"I have come, monsieur, from His Eminence the

Cardinal Duke, on behalf of the two Spanish prisoners you have taken ; he desires information about them at the earliest possible opportunity, and it will be necessary for me to see them and question them. But I did not expect to find you still awake ; I had intended to trouble nobody but your servants in the matter."

After an interchange of polite formalities, the two prisoners were summoned ; Cinq-Mars had already almost forgotten them. The two men appeared ; one—the soldier—young and alert, though somewhat savage looking ; the other enveloped in a dark cloak, and a broad-brimmed hat, which he kept on his head ; his countenance was gloomy, with an expression hard to fathom. This was the officer, who was the first to speak :

" Why have I been disturbed from my slumbers and my straw mattress ? To hang me, or release me ? "

" Neither," replied Joseph.

" And what have you to do with me, oh man of the long beard ? I did not observe you on the field of battle."

After this amiable beginning it was necessary to spend a little time explaining the rights of a Capucin monk to conduct an examination.

" Very well," said the Spaniard at length. " What do you want ? "

" I want to know your name, and the country of your birth."

" I shall not tell you my name. As for my country, I am told I look like a Spaniard. Which does not prove me to be one, for a real Spaniard never does."

Father Joseph, turning towards the two friends, remarked :

" If I am not mistaken, I have heard this man's voice before ; he speaks French without any accent, though by the way he speaks in riddles you would think him a native of the East."

" The East ? Why, for that matter," said the prisoner, " your Spaniard is an Easterner, that is to

say, an orthodox Turk ; his blood boils or stagnates, he is lazy and indefatigable by turns ; he is a slave in his indolence, cruel in his ardour, unshaken in his ignorance, ingenious in his superstition . . . what does it all come to, gentlemen ? Is he a Spaniard or is he a Turk ? Guess for yourselves. Aha, gentlemen ! You are pleased to consider me witty, with an eye for analogies ? You are too kind. Allow me to develop the idea a little further with your permission. In the physical sense, for example, I would have you observe— a man's features may be grave and pointed, his hair dark, and his eyebrows the shape of an almond, his mouth sad and mobile, his cheeks swarthy, lean and furrowed with wrinkles ; his head is shaved and covered with a handkerchief tied in the shape of a turban ; he will spend the entire day sitting or standing in the burning sun, neither moving nor speaking, smoking the weed that stupefies his senses. A Turk, think you, or a Spaniard ? Are you amused, gentlemen ? In truth you seem to be, by the way you laugh. But why laugh ? It was I who gave you the idea, and I do not laugh ; observe the sadness of my countenance. Ah ! Maybe it is because the gloomy prisoner has suddenly begun to chatter ? And because he speaks so quickly ? But that is nothing, I assure you. I could tell you lots of other things besides, and things that might be useful, gentlemen. Anecdotes, for instance. If I were to tell you of a priest I know who had condemned a number of heretics to death before celebrating Mass, and was so furious at being interrupted at the altar for instructions that he turned round before them all and shouted : ' Kill every one of them, I say ! Kill every one ! ' Would that not make you laugh, gentlemen ? Not all of you, perhaps. I think I see a gentleman over there, biting his lips and his beard, too. True—he could tell you all about how wisely he acted, and how wrong it was to interrupt the pure flow of his prayers ! But if I were to add how he has been hiding for the past hour beneath your tent, M. de Cinq-Mars, to hear

your conversation, and that he came here on some treacherous errand, and not for me at all—what would he have to say to that? Now are you satisfied, gentlemen? May I withdraw, now that the exhibition is over? ”

The prisoner had delivered himself of all this with the rapidity of a quack doctor, and in such a loud voice that Joseph was almost stunned. But now he arose, furious, and addressing himself to Cinq Mars :

“ How can you suffer, monsieur,” said he, “ that a prisoner, only fit for the gallows, should speak to you in this manner ? ”

The Spaniard, disdaining to bestow any further attention upon him, leant over towards d’Effiat, and whispered in his ear : “ I am not of the slightest use to you, so give me my liberty. I could have taken it before now, but would not do it without your consent ; give it to me or let me be killed.”

“ Go, if you are able,” replied Cinq-Mars. “ I assure you I should like nothing better.” And he signed to his men to retire with the soldier whom he wished to retain in his service.

No sooner said than done ; and now there remained in the tent only the two friends, Father Joseph—overcome with confusion—and the Spaniard, when the latter, removing his hat, revealed a countenance French but fierce : he burst into a laugh, and seemed to be drinking large draughts of air into his capacious chest.

“ Yes, I am a Frenchman,” said he to Joseph, “ but I hate France, for having given birth to my father, who is a monster in human form, and to me, too, who have become another, and struck him more than once ; I hate all Frenchmen, because they have robbed me of my fortune at dice, and I have robbed them, and killed them afterwards ; for two years now I have been a Spaniard, for the pleasure of killing Frenchmen ; but at the present moment I hate Spain worst of all. The reason why, you shall not know. Adieu. From henceforth I shall live without a country. All men

are my enemies. Go on as you are doing, Joseph, and you will soon be worthy of me ! Oh yes, you have seen me before," he continued, and with one blow of his fist he felled him to the earth. "I am Jacques de Laubardemont, son of your worthy colleague . . ."

Whereupon he turned, and vanished from the tent as rapidly as a ghost. De Thou and the servants, hurrying to the entrance, saw him leap at a bound over a disarmed and stupefied soldier, and run towards the mountains with all the swiftness of a stag, despite the shots that rang out after him to no purpose. Joseph profited by this confusion to disappear, after a few stammered words of politeness, and left the two friends laughing heartily over his surprise and discomfiture—much like two schoolboys, delighted at the sight of their tutor deprived of his spectacles. And now they each sought the rest of which they stood so much in need, and soon both were sleeping—the invalid in his bed, and the young lawyer in his arm-chair.

As for the monk, he made his way towards his tent, pondering how best he could revenge himself for all these happenings. Suddenly he met Laubardemont, dragging along the poor mad girl by her fettered wrists. Each told the other of his horrible adventures.

It was no small pleasure to Joseph to be able to re-open an old wound of such a painful kind.

"Your domestic affairs seem singularly unfortunate," he added. "If you take my advice you will have your niece shut up, and your son and heir hanged, should you be lucky enough to re-discover him."

Laubardemont gave a horrible laugh.

"As for that young idiot, I handed him over to an old son of the law, at present driving a contraband traffic in the Pyrenees at Oloron ; he was to use him as he liked—as his servant if he chose ; it was all the same to me, so long as he never let me set eyes on him again."

Jeanne de Belfiel, with head sunk on her breast, gave no further sign of intelligence ; the small spark of

reason was by now entirely destroyed ; one name alone remained on her lips, and this she repeated again and again : " The Judge ! The Judge ! " And always in a whisper. Then she was silent.

Her uncle and Joseph tossed her, like a sack of corn, on to a horse led by two servants. Laubardemont mounted another, and prepared to depart from the camp, as he wished to reach the mountains before the break of day.

" Bon voyage ! " he called out to Joseph. " Good luck to you in Paris. My compliments to Orestes and Plyades ! "

" Bon voyage ! " returned the latter. " I wish you joy of Oedipus and Cassandra. "

" Oh, he has not yet killed his father or married his mother ! "

" But he is not very far off from these pleasing little escapades ! "

" Good-bye, holy father ! "

" Good-bye, my venerable friend ! " Thus the two friends. But in a whisper the one added : " Farewell, you grey-clad murderer ! I shall find the way to His Eminence's ear in your absence ! " And the other : " Farewell, my red-robed rascal ! Go and put an end to your accursed family ; spill as much of your blood as you like in the process, and I will see to any that remains. . . . I am leaving for the moment ! But the night has not been without results ! "

PART II

CHAPTER I

TURMOIL

"THUS with imagined wing our swift scene flies, in motion of no less celerity than that of thought," cries the immortal Shakespeare in the chorus of one of his tragedies. "Play with your fancies and in them behold . . . a city on the inconstant billows dancing. Follow ! Follow ! " Thus, with his poet's licence, he annihilates time and space, transporting his attentive audience to behold each scene according to his will.

And we, too, propose to exercise the same rights, with none of the same genius, defying, just as he did, the unities of time and place, and turning our looks towards Paris, and the old dark palace of the Louvre, covering in the twinkling of an eye, a distance of two hundred leagues, and a period of two whole years.

Two years ! What changes can be wrought in such a time upon the face of man—let alone upon that troublous family of nations, in which one day will serve to sunder a treaty, one single birth conclude a war, one solitary death cause peace to vanish from the earth.

But in this year of 1642 at which we resume our story, little had changed in France, except the nature of her hopes and fears. The future had taken a somewhat different aspect, and before we meet again with our old familiar friends, a brief survey must be made of the general drift of events.

The unimpaired unity of the French throne was all the more impressive in contrast with the misfortunes of her neighbouring states ; revolts in England, Spain, and Portugal only served to heighten the prestige of

France with all her outward calm, while the fall of such ministers as Strafford and Olivares* had visibly consolidated the power of the Cardinal Duke.

Six formidable armies, resting on their laurels, formed the bulwark of the national defence. Those of the North, leagued together with Sweden, had defeated the Imperial Troops, still harried by the ghost of Gustavus Adolphus ; the Italian army already possessed those towns of Piedmont defended by Prince Thomas, while those troops reinforcing the side of the Pyrenees supported the revolting province of Catalonia, and continued to hover in front of Perpignan, which they were not permitted to capture. Internal affairs were tranquil, though by no means happy. The semblance of peace would seem to be maintained by some unseen spirit, for the King lay mortally sick at Saint-Germain, attended by a young favourite, and the Cardinal was said to be dying at Narbonne. That he was still alive was apparent in the various deaths that occurred from time to time—men carried away mysteriously as though by some poisonous breath of wind, testifying to the existence of some mighty though invisible power.

Saint-Preuil, one of Richelieu's enemies, had just laid his " head of iron " (a name arising from the strength of character which had been his only crime), upon the block, " without fear or shame," as he himself had declared when mounting the scaffold.

France, meanwhile, had all the appearance of governing herself, the Prince and his Minister having been separated for some time. The former had never really held the reins of government, while the latter made his power felt by his own secret methods. His name was never mentioned in conjunction with public acts, and he no longer openly associated himself with the administration ; his name was effaced throughout the country, and he continued to sleep like the spider in the centre of its web.

Any eventful changes that may have taken place

* Prime Minister of Spain.

during the past two years were confined to the hearts of men: those secret and potent changes which, in the reign of a monarchy, give rise to the most terrible upheavals and interminable shedding of blood.

For our own enlightenment, let us turn our eyes towards the old and blackened building of the Louvre---still not completed--and listen to the conversation of those inhabiting its walls.

It was in the month of December; Paris was in the grip of a merciless winter, serving to heighten the miseries of its citizens, while all the while, curiosity was on tip-toe to behold the various spectacles provided by the Court. Poverty was less hard to bear when the troubles of the rich were brought to view; tears became less bitter when beholding the quarrels of the mighty; and the blood of the nobles, shed in the open streets for all the world to see, made poor folk bless their own obscurity. The monarch's weakness had already made itself apparent through several stormy scenes and hair-raising assassinations, confirming only too well the absence and illness of his Chief Minister, and the emotions of the people of Paris were already embittered and stirred up as a sort of prologue to the blood-stained comedy of the Fronde. The populace was by no means averse to this lack of order within itself; the root cause of the quarrels lay too deep for them to grasp, but their respective leaders were regarded with hatred or affection, not so much from motives of self-interest attached to their support, as through the varying powers they possessed of personal appeal.

On one night in particular, the sound of pistol and musket shots had been frequently heard throughout the city. The patrols of the Swiss regiments and the National Guard had been forced to defend themselves from attack in the tortuous streets of the Isle of Notre Dame; waggons, attached to posts and covered with barrels, had prevented the passage of mounted soldiers, and one or two horses and men had already received gun-shot wounds. But for the most part the town still

slept on, except for the neighbourhood around the Louvre, where at the moment the Queen was residing together with Monsieur duc d'Orleans. Here, the signs of a bad storm were brewing only too plainly.

It was two o'clock in the morning and freezing hard. In the darkness of the night a large body of men had assembled on the unpaved quay, and were gradually descending the sandy slope which led towards the Seine. The gathering was about two hundred strong, and all were wrapped around with large cloaks, from beneath which could be seen protruding the handles of their Spanish swords. Without any definite formation, they continued to move up and down, seeming rather to await events than to seek them out. Some were seated with folded arms on the scattered stones of the newly-commenced parapet, and all preserved the strictest silence. Some moments afterwards a man appeared, apparently emerging through a vaulted doorway in the Louvre; in his hand he held a dark lantern, by the rays of which he searched each face among the crowd; this he extinguished, having found the man he sought, to whom he softly spoke the words:

"Well, Olivier, what did Monsieur la Grand* have to say to you? Is everything in order?"

"Perfectly. I saw him yesterday at St. Germain. The old fox is still sick in his lair at Narbonne; but all the same, we must go quietly, as it is not the first time he has feigned to be asleep. And you, Fontrailles? Have you got plenty of folk for to-night?"

"Have no fear on that account. Montrésor is about to join us here with a hundred followers of Monsieur; you will recognise him, disguised as a master mason—a ruler in his hand. But above all, do not forget the word of command. It is known to all of you?"

"To all except Abbé Gondi, who has not yet arrived. But as the Lord lives, I do believe I see him here before me! Who the devil would have recognised him?"

And in truth, a little man, entirely guiltless of any

* The name by which Cinq-Mars was known at this time.

cassock, dressed in the uniform of the French Guards, and adorned with very black and very false moustaches, had just glided amongst them. He hopped from one foot to another, and rubbed his hands together with an air of the utmost glee.

"Praise be to God! Everything goes capitally. My friend Fiesque has surpassed himself."

And, standing on tip-toe to slap Olivier on the shoulder, he continued :

"Allow me to tell you, Sire Olivier d'Entraigues, that for a young man but recently freed from his pagedom, you have not done so badly! One of these days, if a Plutarch appears among us, you will figure among his records. Everything is admirably arranged; you have arrived in the nick of time, not too early, nor too late, like a true leader of men. Fontrailles, this young devil will go far, take my word for it. And now we must bestir ourselves. In a couple of hours from now I am expecting some parishioners of my uncle, the Archbishop of Paris; I have stirred them up to their hearts' content to cry: '*Vive Monsieur! Vive la Régence!* Down with the Cardinal!' Being all of them entirely devoted to my service they will shout like so many madmen. The King, I hear, is worse. All goes well, extremely well. I have just come from Saint-Germain where I have seen Cinq-Mars. He is firm as a rock, as usual! There's a man for you! How he imposes on them all with his air of melancholy indifference! There is no more powerful man at Court to-day. They say the King is thinking of conferring a dukedom upon him—only he cannot quite make up his mind at present. We must make it up for him this very evening. The people's will! Nothing else counts! And it shall be Richelieu's death! You are aware of that? Hate for the Cardinal is the one essential cry! That should decide our Gaston, for ever sitting on the fence."

"What else is he capable of doing?" asked Fontrailles. "If he were to declare in our favour to-day, so much the worse for us."

“And why?”

“Because that would mean for certain that to-morrow we should have him against us.”

“Never mind,” replied the Abbé. “The Queen has all the brains.”

“And a heart too,” said Olivier. “So much the better for Cinq-Mars, who has sometimes seemed to me a little too wooden in that respect.”

“Silly boy that you are! How little you know of Court ways! Nothing can raise up Cinq-Mars but the hand of His Majesty, who loves him like his own son. As for the Queen, if her heart beats at all, it is with memories of the past rather than hopes of the future! But, enough of these trivialities. Tell me—are you quite sure of that young lawyer of yours whom I see roaming about over there? Is he one of the right sort?”

“Absolutely. An excellent Royalist, who would throw the Cardinal into the river if he got a chance. It is Fournier, from Loudon. No need to say more.”

“Very good. We want that sort of fellow. Come now, gentlemen—look about you! Here come our visitors from the Rue Saint-Honoré.”

“Who goes there?” called the outposts of the band to the new arrivals. “For the King or the Cardinal?”

“*Gaston*,” and “*Le Grand*!” replied they under their breath.

“It is Montrésor with the followers of Monsieur,” declares Fontrailles. “We should soon be starting now.”

“By Heaven, yes!” declared one of the newcomers. “For the Cardinal’s men will be passing at three. We have just been told so.”

“Where are they going to?” asked Fontrailles.

“There are over two hundred of them sent as escort for M. de Chavigny, who is going to visit the old fox at Narbonne. They think it best to skirt along the Louvre.”

“They shall not have that trouble in vain,” said the Abbé.

No sooner had he spoken than the noise of horses

and coaches drew near. Several of the cloaked men rolled an enormous stone into the middle of the street. The mounted escort passed rapidly through the crowd, pistol in hand, as though on the look-out for trouble, but the postillion guiding the horses of the first carriage, stumbled against the stone and was brought down.

"Whose is this coach riding rough-shod over harmless citizens?" shouted out all the cloaked men with one accord. "A monstrous outrage! None but the Cardinal's friends would do it!"

"Someone who does not fear your little friend Le Grand, at all events," cried a voice from the open window. A mounted man immediately pounced upon him.

"Throw the Cardinal's men into the river!" cried out a high piercing voice. This proved the signal for a furious exchange of pistol shots on either side; through the gloom and the tumult, pierced by occasional flashes of light, rose the clashing of swords and the trampling of horses' feet, while above could be heard the cries of the opposing parties: "Down with the Minister!" "Long live the King!" "Death to the Red Stockings!" interspersed with: "Long live His Eminence the Cardinal Duke!" "Death to the Rebels!" "Long live His Majesty!" for in these strange times all quarrels were conducted under the Sovereign's name.

The men on foot managed to draw the two coaches across the quay in such a way as to form a barricade for Chavigny's horses, from whence they fired on their opponents from between the wheels, doors and springs. They had already several casualties to their account, and the uproar was becoming terrific, when the gates of the Louvre suddenly opened to admit two bodies of the Royal Guard who descended upon them, torch in hand. The scene changed. No sooner had a guardsman approached one of the men on foot, than the latter would remove his hat, reveal his face and pronounce his name, whereupon the guard would withdraw, more often than not having repeatedly shaken him by the hand. This kind of rescue was of small service to Chavigny, and only

served to increase the uproar. The guardsmen, apparently as a sop to their consciences, ran hither and thither among the disputants, crying out : " Softly, gentlemen, softly . . . " But whenever they came across two men engaged in deadly combat, they immediately paused and watched them, while some would even favour the swordsman whom he believed to be of his own way of thinking—for this corps, like all other French regiments, contained its own Royalists and Cardinalists.

Bit-by-bit the windows of the Louvre were lighted up, and a variety of women's heads were seen peering forth from behind the lozenged-paned windows, eager to behold the result of the fray.

And now a number of Swiss soldiers bore down with their torches—easily distinguished by their strange uniform. Their right arms were striped with red and blue, while their right legs were clad in red silk stockings ; whereas their left sleeve was striped red, white, and blue, and their left leg red and white. It had evidently been hoped in the royal palace that this foreign band could dissipate the fighters ; but things proved otherwise. These impassive soldiers, carrying out their instructions to the letter, broke deliberately through the two groups of combatants, separated by them for one brief moment, only to form up again before their gateway, with the utmost precision, and withdraw again on the word of command, without waiting to discover whether the foe they had just disposed of had come to grips again or not.

The noise now broke out again with redoubled force. Cries, oaths, and imprecations were heard on all sides, and it looked as though nothing could end the dispute but the entire destruction of one side or another. One voice rose above all the rest. Abbé Gondi was engaged in dragging a rider off his horse by the cloak, and crying : " To me, all of you ! The day is ours, Fontrailles ! We have them in the hollow of our hand ! Excellent ! Excellent ! "

And leaving go his man, he mounted on to a boulder

to observe the movement of his troops, for all the world like a general at the head of his army. Day was now beginning to break, and from the other end of the Isle of St. Louis a host of people could be seen running, women and children, the dregs of the populace, uttering strange cries as they ran. Long swords were being carried by girls, while children trailed behind them old engraved pikes, of the time of the League; old ragged men tottered after them, dragging along by cords old coaches painted over with worn-out emblems and coats of arms; workmen of all kinds, most of them drunk, followed behind with sticks, pitchforks, and lances, torches, boat-hooks, sabres, and pointed spits; they sang and howled by turns, imitating cat-calls with hideous laughter, and carrying as a standard one of these animals, at the end of a long stick, clothed in a red rag—designed to represent the Cardinal, whose affection for cats was generally known. Town criers ran hither and thither, panting and scarlet, overflowing on to the walls and the pavements, the parapets of the houses and even the very palace itself, shouting their interminable rhymed lampoons, written around the public characters of the day. Butcher-boys and watermen, armed with long knives, beat the charge on old kettles, dragging behind them a pig with its throat newly cut, wearing on its head the red cap of a chorister. Comic figures, men clad as women, with coarse flushed faces, cried out in frantic voices: “We are the mothers of the families that Richelieu has ruined! Death to the Cardinal!” In their arms they carried straw babies which they pretended to cast into the river, eventually throwing them there in reality.

The invasion of the quays by this disgusting and sinister rabble, had produced a strange effect upon the combatants—and one entirely opposite to that which had been foreseen by the prime instigator. Each side lowered its weapons and ceased fighting. The supporters of Monsieur and of Cinq-Mars were revolted at the thought of being assisted by such a mob, and them-

served helped the Cardinal's men on to their feet and into their coach, assisting their servants to carry in the wounded, and arranging further meeting places with their particular adversaries, where their quarrels might be continued with more privacy and less indignity. Blushing with shame at their superior numbers, and at the quality of the troops they appeared to command, and realising, perhaps for the first time, the kind of mud they had helped to stir up, they now separated and withdrew, cramming their large hats well down over their eyes, wrapping their mantles around their shoulders, and doing all they could to escape the light of day.

"You have spoiled everything by producing this disgusting rabble, my dear Abbé," said Fontrailles, stamping his foot in front of Gondi, himself sufficiently confounded. "That uncle of yours has a pretty lot of parishioners, I must say."

"It is not my fault," replied Gondi in an obstinate tone. "The fools arrived an hour too late. If they had come in the middle of the night nobody would have seen them (for I admit they do not stand the light of day), and we should have heard nothing but the voice of the people: *Vox populi, Vox Dei!* There is no great harm done, after all; by turning up in such numbers they enabled us to escape without being seen, and when all is said and done, our task is practically accomplished. We never meant the death of the rascal. Chavigny and his people are a brave lot, and I love them; if it has only ended in a few wounded, so much the better. Farewell. I am going now to see M. de Bouillon, just arrived from Italy."

"Olivier," said Fontrailles, "go over to Saint-Germain with Fournier and Ambrosio. I am going to report to Monsieur, with Montrésor."

The party now broke up, disgust having produced a result in the minds of these young bloods which force was powerless to achieve.

And so the affray ended, in spite of its threatening commencement. Nobody was killed; the riding party,

with a few scratches to their credit, continued its astonished way through devious side-streets, while the others escaped, one by one, from the sight of the populace they had themselves aroused. The miserable crowd, deprived of its leaders, remained for an hour or two, uttering the same cries, until their wine barrels were exhausted, and the increasing cold finally extinguished their flow of courage and enthusiasm. From the windows of the houses along the city quay, prudent and respectable citizens could now be seen mournfully and silently regarding the signs of the recent disorder ; while a body of merchants, clad all in black, and preceded by its officials and functionaries, walked slowly and courageously through the crowd, towards the Palais de Justice, where the Parliament would soon be meeting, there to lodge their complaint concerning these horrible nocturnal scenes.

Nevertheless, much rumour was rife in the apartments of Gaston of Orleans. This Prince was now residing in that wing of the Louvre parallel to the Tuilleries, its windows overlooking the court on one side, and on the other a group of little houses and narrow streets covering the Square almost entirely. He had risen hurriedly, awakened at the sound of fire-arms, and having drawn on his large square slippers with high heels, and wrapped around his body a large green silk dressing-gown, embroidered with golden patterns, he walked up and down his bed-chamber, every moment sending a fresh lackey to enquire for news, and exclaiming that the Abbé de la Rivière should be sent for, his accustomed counsellor in all difficulties ; but, by some misfortune, the latter had already gone out of Paris. At the sound of every pistol shot this fearful Prince would hurry to the window, where he was quite unable to see anything but the torches carried by the fighting men. In vain they told him that the cries being uttered were in his favour ; he continued to wander around his apartments in the utmost perturbation, with his long black hair in lank disorder, and his blue eyes wide open with fright and apprehension.

When at length Fontrailles and Montrésor entered his room they found him almost naked, beating himself on the chest and exclaiming : “ *Mea culpa, mea culpa !* ”

“ Come in, come in ! ” he cried out to them from afar. “ Come in quickly and tell me what has happened. What has been going on out there ? Who are the assassins ? What are all those cries ? ”

“ They have been crying ‘ Long live Monsieur ! ’ ”

Gaston, with no appearance of listening to them, held open the door of his room for his voice to reach to his retinue in the outer galleries, and exclaimed with all his might :

“ I know nothing about all these things, which have occurred without my permission. I want to hear nothing. I want to know nothing. I am a party to none of their schemes. It has been stirred up by a lot of sedition-mongers. Do not speak to me of it, if you wish to be well received in here. I am enemy to no man, and detest all scenes of this sort.”

Fontrailles, knowing the sort of man he had to deal with, said nothing, but entered with his friend, taking his time, so that Monsieur’s first ardour might have every opportunity of evaporating. When all had been said, and the door carefully closed, he resumed his conversation :

“ Monseigneur,” said he, “ we have most humbly to beg your pardon for their impertinence of the crowd, which never ceases to cry death to your enemy, and to express its desire to see you as Regent, should we have the misfortune to lose His Majesty. The mob is always free in its expressions ; but such were their numbers that we were unable to control them. It was a cry from the heart of the multitude ; an outcrop of affection, not to be repressed by pure reason, or restrained by any kind of rules.”

“ But tell me what has taken place,” replied Gaston, a little calmer in his mind. “ I have been listening to them ever since four o’clock this morning. What have they been doing ? ”

"This same affection," continued Montrésor deliberately, "as M. de Fontrailles has just had the honour of explaining to you, is so much beyond all rules and regulations that we were ourselves caught up on the wings of its enthusiasm, and carried away by the name of Monsieur to commit deeds entirely unpremeditated."

"But tell me what it is you have done!" reiterated the Prince.

"These things," replied Fontrailles, "of which M. de Montrésor has had the honour to speak to Monsieur, are precisely the things which I myself predicted here last evening, when I had the privilege of an interview."

"There can be no question of that," interrupted Gaston. "Nobody can say that I have ordered or authorised anything at all. I have implicated myself in nothing whatsoever, and have no understanding of any kind with the Government . . ."

"Of course," continued Fontrailles, "nothing has been done as a result of Your Highness's orders, but you may perhaps be good enough to remember that I did predict a certain amount of disturbance towards the early morning, and I hoped it might have the effect of lessening your astonishment."

The Prince, recovering himself little by little, and seeing that his two young stalwarts were in no wise intimidated, realising, moreover, within himself—and reading the acknowledgment in their eyes—that he had given his consent the previous evening, now sat himself down on the edge of his bed, folding his arms with a judicial air, and demanded in a tone of voice meant to be impressive:

"Once for all—what has happened?"

"Practically nothing at all, Monseigneur," replied Fontrailles. "We met by chance in the crowd a certain number of our friends, quarrelling with the coachman of M. de Chavigny who was riding them down; a few lively passages occurred, a few brusque gestures, and one or two scratches which obliged the carriage to retrace its steps—and that is all."

"Absolutely all," confirmed Montrésor.

"All!" exclaimed Gaston in a frenzy, striding about the room. "And do you call it nothing—stopping the carriage of a friend of the Cardinal Duke? I have told you before, I do not like these scenes; I bear no hatred to the Cardinal; he is a great politician—a very great politician indeed. You have compromised me horribly. Everyone knows Montrésor belongs to my party; anyone seeing you there would think I had sent you . . ."

"As chance would have it," replied Montrésor, "I came across this citizen's dress, which Monsieur can see beneath my cloak, and which I chose to wear for the occasion."

Gaston breathed again. "You are quite sure that nobody has recognised you?" he asked. "I am sure you realise, my dear friend, how painful it would be for me . . . put yourself in my place . . ."

"I am absolutely certain, as Heaven is above me!" declared this young adherent. "I will wager my head and my share of Paradise that not a soul saw my face or heard my name spoken."

"Very well," continued Gaston, re-seating himself on his bed in a calmer frame of mind, not wholly devoid of a certain satisfaction, "tell me a little about what happened."

Fontrailles undertook the recital, in which, as may be supposed, the people had a large share, and the supporters of Monsieur a very small one. He concluded with the following details:

"From your very own windows, Monseigneur, respectable mothers of families were to be seen, driven wild with despair, and throwing their infants into the Seine while they cursed the name of Richelieu."

"Monstrous!" exclaimed the Prince, overcome—or so it seemed—with indignation at the horror of these atrocities. "Is it really true, then, that he is so universally hated? I am bound to admit that he deserves it! When one thinks of the depths to which his ambition and avarice have reduced the poor people of Paris, whom I love so well . . ."

"Yes, indeed, Monseigneur," agreed the spokesman, "and in this case it is not Paris only, but the whole of France begging you to deliver it from the power of such a tyrant. All is ready; nothing is wanted but a sign from your honoured self, for the overthrow of this pygmy, who has attempted to humiliate even the Royal Family!"

"Alas! God is my witness that I forgive him for that sin," replied Gaston, raising his eyes to Heaven. "But I cannot for ever go on hearing the cries of the populace; sooner or later I must go to its rescue . . ."

"Ah! You will find us at your feet!" exclaimed Montrésor, with obeisance.

"That is to say," replied the Prince, drawing back hastily, "so long as my dignity is not compromised, nor my name mentioned in any way."

"But that is exactly what we wish!" replied Fontrailles, now somewhat easier in his mind. "Come now, Monseigneur, already there are certain names desirous to be coupled with your own, and in no way afraid of being written down. I will repeat them to you, if you desire it . . ."

"But—but—but—" stammered the Duke of Orleans, taking fright again, "do you know that this thing you are proposing to me is nothing short of a conspiracy?"

"Come, come, Monseigneur! A conspiracy! Among people of honour such as we are? Not the least in the world! A league, at the very most; a simple form of agreement, to give some direction to the unanimous wish of the entire nation and the Royal Court. Nothing but that!"

"But—but—you have not made yourself clear. This affair will be neither general nor public; therefore it must be a conspiracy. Do you not admit yourself to be one of the conspirators?"

"I, Monseigneur? With your permission, only in so far as the whole kingdom is already involved in it, and I belong to the kingdom. After all, who would not write his name after those of Cinq-Mars and M. de Bouillon?"

"Afterwards, perhaps. But before?" demanded Gaston, fixing his gaze on Fontrailles with more penetration than the latter had expected. He hesitated a moment before replying:

"But what would Monsieur say if I were to mention certain names after which he could write his own?"

"That may be an excellent joke," replied the Prince with a laugh, "but you are probably aware of the fact that very few names can be written before my own. In fact, I only know of one."

"And if there should be one, Monseigneur, should we then have your promise of your signature of Gaston underneath it?"

"With all my heart. For that could mean none other than His Majesty, and I have yet to learn that he is of my party!"

"Then from this time onwards," said Montrésor, "we shall hope to take you at your word, and that you will grant us two small requests. First to see M. de Bouillon together with Her Majesty, and later, the Master of the Horse* with the King."

"Why, as to that," cried out Monsieur gaily, as he slapped Montrésor on the shoulder, "I was about to attend my sister-in-law's toilet this very day, and I shall probably invite my brother to go stag-hunting with me."

The two friends asked nothing better, and were astonished themselves at how much they had accomplished, for never had they beheld so much resolution on the part of their Chief. From fear of undoing the good work, they now turned the conversation into other channels, and retired, charmed with their day's work, with a few final whispers in his ear as to their complete reliance on his promises.

* Cinq-Mars.

CHAPTER II

WITHIN THE ALCOVE

MEANWHILE, at the time when a Prince was being re-assured with the utmost difficulty by his supporters, and exposing them to the infection of his own timidity, a Princess—far more the sport of circumstance, far more isolated through her husband's indifference, and far weaker by nature and the lack of courage which accompanies lack of happiness—was exhibiting the utmost bravery and the most praiseworthy resignation, while she controlled her terrified followers by the force of her example. This was the Queen. She had slept for barely an hour when shrill cries made themselves heard behind the doors and the thick tapestries of her bed-chambers. Whereupon she ordered her ladies-in-waiting to enter, and the Duchess of Chevreuse, in her night dress, enveloped in a long cloak, collapsed on the point of fainting at the foot of her bed, followed by several other women of the royal suite. Her tender feet were naked and bleeding, for she had been slightly injured on her way; she had cried and sobbed like a child, when a pistol shot had pierced through the shutters of her room, and now she implored the Queen to send her into exile to a place where she would find peace and quiet, instead of being assassinated as a friend of Her Majesty. Her hair was tumbling around her in confusion, reaching almost to her feet; it was her chief beauty, and the young Queen thought to herself that this hasty toilet had not been entirely the work of unpremeditated chance.

"My dear child, what is it?" she enquired, herself completely self-possessed. "You look exactly like a youthful Madeleine, in the days before her repentance. If this is the result of resentment on somebody's part, believe me, it is much more likely to be directed against myself than anybody else. So take heart."

"Oh, no, Madame, save me, protect me. . . . It is Richelieu himself who pursues me, I am quite convinced of it."

The increasing noise of fire-arms now convinced the Queen that the fears of Madame de Chevreuse were not entirely without foundation.

"Bring me my clothes, Madame de Motteville," she cried.

But by this time the latter had lost her head entirely, and was engaged in opening a large ebony chest, from which she took a case of diamonds. They were the Queen's, and so anxious was the lady-in-waiting to save them, that she could not listen to instructions. The other women meanwhile had seen through the window the light of the torches, and imagining the palace to be on fire, were hurriedly collecting together lace, jewellery, gold vases, and even china ornaments, which they were cramming into a sheet, preparatory to throwing it out of the window. At this moment Madame de Gueménée appeared upon the scene, somewhat more clothed than the Duchess de Chevreuse, but in a state of mind even more tragic; indeed her alarm caused some apprehension to the Queen herself, for this was the most self-possessed and ceremonious of all her attendants. She now entered without any preliminaries, pale as a ghost, and talking rapidly:

"Madame, the time has come for us to confess our sins. The Louvre is being attacked, and people are hastening up from the city, so I am told."

A terrified silence reigned throughout the room.

"We shall all be killed!" cried out the Duchess de Chevreuse, still on her knees. "Ah, my God! Why did I ever leave England? Hear my confession! . . . I keep nothing back. . . . I loved . . . and he loved me . . ."

"Come, come," said the Queen, "I will not undertake the part of father confessor; I have dangers sufficient to incur as it is."

The coolness of Anne of Austria and the severity of

her remark succeeded somewhat in calming the beautiful penitent, who arose in confusion, aware of the disorder of her dress, which she went into the next room to remedy to the best of her ability.

"Dona Stephania," said the Queen to the only Spanish woman whom she had retained among her suite, "Go and find the Captain of the Guards; it is time I had some man to deal with, and put an end to all this foolishness."

This was said in Spanish, and the mystery of an order in a language they did not know, went far to quieten the occupants of the room. The maid of honour was telling her beads; but at her mistress's behest she rose up hastily and left the room to carry out her instructions.

Meanwhile the sounds of terror and revolution were becoming more and more distinct both within and without. The trampling of horses was heard in the grand court of the Palace, together with sharp words of command, the rumbling of the royal coaches, being harnessed preparatory to flight, and the noise of chains being drawn across the ground to form barricades in case of attack, together with hurried footsteps, the clash of arms, the bustle of men running along the passages and dull confused cries of the multitude rising and falling, like the waves of the sea.

And now the door opened once more—this time to admit a very charming person.

"I was waiting for you, dear Marie," said the Queen, holding out her arms to the Duchess of Mantua; you have been braver than all the rest of us, and come here dressed for all the Court to see."

"Fortunately, I had not gone to bed," replied the Princess of Gonzaga, "and saw all these people through my window. Oh, madame, madame, fly! I implore you to escape by the secret stairway, and let us stay here in your place. They might mistake one of us for the Queen, and," she added, bursting into tears, "I have just heard cries of 'Death!' Save yourself, Madame! I have no throne to lose! But you are

daughter, wife and mother too of Kings ! Save yourself and leave us here ! ”

“ You have more to lose than I have, my child, in youth and beauty and, I hope, in happiness also,” replied the Queen with a gracious smile, holding out her beautiful hand to be kissed. Stay here with me in my alcove—just you and I together. The only service I ask from you is to bring here to my bedside that little golden casket which poor Motteville has left lying on the floor, and which contains all my dearest treasure.” Then, having received it from Marie’s hands, she whispered in her ear :

“ If anything should happen to me, promise that you will take charge of this and throw it in the Seine.”

“ I will obey you, Madame, both as my benefactress and my second mother,” replied the girl, weeping.

The noise of the fighting on the quay grew louder and louder, and the window-panes reflected the light of the firing. The Captain of the Guards and of the Swiss troops arrived, sent by Dona Stephania, to ask for instructions.

“ Tell them to come in,” said the Queen. “ And you, mesdames, stay here by my side. I am a man for the time being, and must deal with men.” Then, drawing aside her bed-curtains, she addressed the officers :

“ Messieurs, please remember that you will answer with your lives for the safety of the young Princes, my sons. You are aware of that, M. de Guitaut ? ”

“ I sleep across their doorway, Madame. But this revolt is directed neither against them, nor Your Majesty.”

“ Good. But you will please think of them before you think of me,” interrupted the Queen, “ and protect all those in danger, whoever they may be. You hear me, too, M. de Bassompierre, do you not ? You are a gentleman. Forget for the time being that your uncle lies in the Bastille, and do your duty towards the grandsons of his friend, the late King.”

The latter was a young man with a frank and open countenance. "Your Majesty," said he, with a slight German accent, "may observe that it is my own family I am forgetting, and not hers." And he held up his left hand, from which two fingers had just been severed. "I have still another hand left," he added, with a salute. After which he withdrew, together with Guitaut.

The Queen, deeply moved, rose to her feet, and notwithstanding the prayers of the Princess de Guemenée and the tears of Marie de Gonzaga, insisted on placing herself in front of the half-open window, leaning on the shoulder of the Duchess of Mantua.

"What is that I hear?" cried she. "Surely I hear them cry out 'Long live the King!' 'Long live the Queen!'"

The populace, recognising their sovereign, renewed their cries of "Death to the Cardinal! Long live Monsieur le Grand!"

Marie started.

"What is the matter?" enquired the Queen, as she looked at her.

But as the trembling girl made no reply, this good and gracious princess pretended not to notice her, and, directing all her attention towards the cries and movements of the mob, she exaggerated an uneasiness which had quickly been dispelled by their exclamations. An hour later, being informed that the insurgents would withdraw at a gesture on her part, she gave it graciously, and with an air of satisfaction; but in the bottom of her heart she was troubled by many things, and above all when thinking of the Regency. The further she leaned out of the window, in order to show herself, the more horrible were the scenes presented to her sight in the growing light of day; her heart sank with terror, in proportion as the necessity grew for her to appear calm and confident, and her thoughts were in bitter contrast to the brightness of her words and face. Exposed to the gaze of all the world, she realised

her woman's weakness, and trembled to behold the people that soon she might be called upon to govern—subjects that knew, only too well, how to call upon their rulers, and shout the cry of "Death" to those in power.

She bowed to them.

A hundred and fifty years afterwards such a bow was seen again—this time from another Princess with Austrian blood in her veins, and Queen of France. And in the meantime, the Monarchy, such as Richelieu had made it, had been born and died.

But now the Princess gave orders for her windows to be closed, and dismissed her frightened suite. The thick curtains were drawn across, and the room was lit by the light of a day already hateful in her sight; large white wax torches still continued to burn in the branched and golden candelabras fixed to the tapestried fleur de lis with which the walls were hung. The Queen desired to remain alone with Marie of Mantua, and retiring with her into her little alcove, fell prostrate on her couch; gone were her smiles and her bravery, and she now burst into tears, burying her head within her pillow. Marie, kneeling on the velvet carpet, held one of her mistress's hands within her own, and silently laid it against her forehead, not daring to be the first to speak, for never yet had the Queen been seen to shed a tear.

And so they stayed for a few brief moments. Then, with a great effort the Queen roused herself and said:

"Never mind me, my child; let me cry. It is so good for a Queen to weep. If you should pray God for me, ask Him to give me strength not to hate the enemy that pursues me everywhere, and will ultimately ruin the Royal Family and the crown of France through his own ambitious schemes. I can trace his hand in what has just been happening, and all these dreadful riots."

"But, Madame, surely he is still at Narbonne? For you mean the Cardinal, of course? And did you

not hear how their cries were all for you and against him ? ”

“ Ah, my child, he may be three hundred leagues away, but his evil spirit watches at this very door. If these cries were uttered, it was because he allowed it to be so ; if these men were gathered together against him, it is just that the moment has not yet arrived in which he will destroy them all. Believe me, I know him well, and have paid a high price for that knowledge ; for it has cost me all the advantage of my rank, the pleasures of my youth, the love of my family, and even the heart of my husband. He has shut me out from all the world, and hedges me around within a barrier of honour and respect ; and recently he has even dared, to the scandal of the whole of France, to subject me to suspicion ! My papers have been searched, and I myself have been questioned. They have even made me write my guilt with my own hand, and ask pardon from His Majesty for I know not what fault against him ; while I have to thank the devotion of a faithful servant*—imprisoned for life, for aught I know—for the possession of this casket which you have saved for me. I see in your face that you think my fears too great ; but do not let yourself be deceived, like all the rest of the Court. Never forget that this man is everywhere, and penetrates our inmost thoughts.”

“ Oh, Madame ! Does he even know of the cries these people have uttered beneath your windows, and the names of those that roused them to it ? ”

“ No doubt he has foreseen or arranged it all ; it will serve his purpose by compromising me in the eyes of the King, and keeping me apart from him for ever. He wishes to humiliate me utterly.”

“ But His Majesty’s affections have been fixed now for two whole years. And not upon a woman ! ”

The Queen smiled, and for a few moments looked in

* His name was Laporte. Neither the threat of torture, nor promises of the Cardinal’s gold, ever succeeded in making him breathe a word of the Queen’s secrets.

silence at the pure and pretty face before her. The young girl's look was so sincere and frank. Her mistress smoothed back the dark curls from her forehead, and seemed to gain confidence by the very innocence of her expression, as she kissed her on the cheek and said :

" My dear little friend, you have yet to realise a melancholy truth. The King loves nobody, and those who seem to be highest in his favour are in greatest danger of being cast down, and delivered to the power that devours all things."

" Merciful Heavens ! What is this you are telling me ? "

" Do you not know how many he has ruined already ? " The Queen spoke softly, and gazed at her companion as if trying to read her inmost thoughts. " Do you realise the end of all the royal favourites ? Have you never heard of the exile of Baradas and of Saint-Simon, the convent of Mademoiselle de La Fayette, the shame of Madame de Hautefort, the death of Monsieur de Chalais, a mere child, the youngest of all those who have been tortured, or proscribed, or even poisoned—for they all disappeared at the slightest whisper of an order on the part of Richelieu, the royal master. Had it not been for this favour that you take for friendship, their lives had been spent in peace ; but favour of this sort is mortal, it is a deadly poison. See that tapestry over there, with a picture of Semele ? The favourites of Louis XIII. are doomed like she was ; their devotion is a flame that burns and consumes."

But the young Duchess was no longer in a condition to listen to the Queen ; her large black eyes were obscured in a mist of tears ; her hands trembled within those of Anne of Austria, and her lips were quivering piteously.

" I am very cruel, am I not, Marie ? " continued the Queen, in the gentlest of voices, still stroking the girl's head, as though she were a child, from whom she sought to gain some admission. " Ah, yes, I

know it. I am cruel and horrible, and you feel you cannot bear any more. Come, speak to me. What has passed between you and M. de Cinq-Mars ? ”

At these words, Marie's grief could contain itself no longer, and throwing herself at her sovereign's feet, and burying her head in her kind and gentle breast, the girl sobbed as though her heart would surely break. The Queen waited for this first outbreak of despair to pass away, rocking her softly in her arms and saying repeatedly :

“ My child ! Come, my child, do not grieve so bitterly ! ”

“ Ah, Madame,” cried Marie, “ I have been most terribly to blame towards you. But how could I know all the goodness of your heart ? I have been wrong, and indeed I am punished most severely ! But alas ! How could I dare confide in you, Madame ? It was not that I could not lay bare my heart to you, but how could I expect that you should wish to share my secrets ? ”

The Queen reflected a moment, as though regaining control over herself, then laid one finger upon her lips.

“ You are right,” said she, “ you are quite right, Marie. It is always the first word that is so hard to speak, and that is so often the cause of all our ruin. The royal dignity, it seems, must be preserved at all costs ! Ah ! how difficult it is to be a Queen ! Here have I been trying to read the depths of your heart, only to find that I have come too late.”

Marie of Mantua bowed her head without replying.

“ Must I persuade you into talking, then ? ” asked the Queen. “ Must I remind you how I have adopted you almost like my own daughter ; how, after trying to make you marry the King's own brother, I have endeavoured to secure for you the throne of Poland. Must I do more than that, Marie ? Why, yes, I must, and for you I will, and if by then you have not revealed your whole soul to me, you are not the friend I thought you were. Come, open this casket. Here is the key ;

open it bravely, and do not tremble as you see me do."

The Duchess of Mantua hesitatingly did as she was told, and beheld a knife lying in the little box; the blade was large and very rusty, and the handle was of iron. It lay over a monogram of letters, wreathed into the name of Buckingham. She tried to pick it up, but Anne of Austria prevented her.

"Look no further," she said to her, "you have seen the Queen's sole treasure—the blood of a man, now dead, but who lived for me alone, the most brilliant noble of all the Courts in Europe; for my sake he was decked in diamonds from the English Crown; he evoked a deadly war, and armed a fleet, commanded by himself for the pleasure of fighting the man who was my husband; he crossed the seas to pluck a flower that my feet had touched, and ran the risk of death to kiss and water with his tears the foot of this very bed, in the presence of two of my maids of honour. What more is there to say? Except to tell you that I loved him, that I still love him, and my life is filled entirely with memories of him. He never knew how I loved him; never even knew that I did love him; my face in his presence was as marble, while my heart was broken with the grief of it. For I was Queen of France."

Here Anne of Austria grasped Marie by the arm. "In future you must have the resolution," she continued, "to speak to me of this love of yours, and to keep silence when I speak to you of mine."

"Indeed, Madame, I shall never be afraid again to confide my grief in you, who are to me. . . ."

"A woman and a friend," interrupted the Queen. "My fright betrayed me into being a woman and telling you a secret unknown to all the world; the love I bear for the man I loved has been revealed to you. Speak, speak to me of yours, while yet there is still time. . . ."

"As to time," replied Marie, with an embarrassed smile, "Mons. Cinq-Mars and myself are united for good and all."

"For good and all?" exclaimed the Queen. "What can you mean by that? What of your rank, your name, your future? Do they count for nothing? Are you going to cause this grief to all your family?"

"I have been thinking of it for the past four years, and ten days ago we were affianced."

"Affianced?" said the Queen, striking her hands together, "but you have been deceived, Marie. No one dares do that without the King's consent. You have been the victim of an intrigue—shamefully betrayed. . . ."

Marie paused a moment before replying:

"Nothing could be more simple, Madame, than our affection for one another. I was living, as you know, in the old castle of Chaumont, near the Maréchale, his mother. I had retired there to mourn for my father, and soon it appeared that he himself had a similar loss for which to grieve. His grief was as great as my own; all that he said I had already thought, and when we spoke to one another of our sorrows, we found them both alike. As I had been the first to experience grief, I was the better able to plumb the depths of his, and tried to comfort him by telling him what I had suffered, that in pitying me he might forget himself. That was the beginning of our love-story which, as you see, was born almost between two tombs."

"God send, my child, that it may have a happy end," said the Queen.

"I hope it may, Madame, since I have your prayers," said Marie. "Besides, lately the sun has seemed to smile upon me. But in those days I was terribly unhappy. One day the news arrived at the Château that the Cardinal had summoned M. Cinq-Mars to join the army, and it seemed as though something was being taken from me which was mine, though as yet we were strangers to one another. But M. de Bassompierre never ceased to talk of death and battles, and every night I retired to my room to weep. At first I thought it was for the past I wept, but soon I realised

that my tears were for the future, and that they were different in their nature, as for the first time I desired to hide them."

"Some time passed in expectation of his departure, and every day I saw him and pitied him that he must go, while again and again he told me how dearly he would wish to live on there for ever in his own country, where we dwelt. Up to the very day of leaving he was devoid of all ambition, being ignorant of whether he—he—I can hardly put it to Your Majesty. . . ." And Marie blushed and smiled, and gazed down upon the floor.

"Come, come," said the Queen, "of whether he was loved?"

"And that night, Madame, he left me an ambitious man."

"He has certainly proved himself to be one," said Anne of Austria, with a slight tone of relief in her voice. "And so he went away. But in two years he returned, and you saw him again?"

"Very rarely, Madame," said the young Duchess, with a touch of pride, "and always in a church and in the presence of a priest before whom I promised to devote myself to M. Cinq-Mars."

"And do you call that a marriage? Is that what they have dared to do to you? I shall have the matter looked into. Heavens! What errors, my child; what countless errors in those few words you have told me. . . . Leave me to think it over. . . ."

The Queen continued to murmur to herself, her head bowed reflectively:—

"All reproaches are useless and cruel, if the harm is done. The past is out of our hands, and we have only to think of the future. Cinq-Mars in himself is a good man, brave, intelligent, and with a certain depth of mind; I have noticed the progress he has made in these past two years, and I see now it was for Marie. He has behaved well, and in my eyes he is not unworthy of her; but in the eyes of Europe things are different.

He must rise still higher, if he is to win her hand ; the Princess of Mantua can wed with nothing lower than a Prince. He would have to have that rank. I can do nothing on my side. I am no longer the Queen, but the King's neglected wife. There is only the Cardinal—the eternal Cardinal—and he is his enemy. This very riot, maybe. . . .”

“ Alas ! It is the beginning of war between them both ! In a flash it has been revealed to me ! ”

“ Then he is lost,” cried the Queen, taking Marie into her arms. “ Forgive me, my dearest, for making you suffer like this, but we must discover everything and face it for ourselves. He is lost, if he does not himself succeed in ruining this evil man ; for the King will never relinquish his Minister. Nothing but force. . . .”

“ He will conquer him, Madame ! He will do it with your help. You are the good genius of France. Oh . . . I beg of you. Protect the angel against the powers of the Evil One. It is your own cause, that of your royal family and all your land . . . ”

The Queen smiled. “ And above all, it is your cause, my child, is it not ? And that is why I shall embrace it with all my strength ; it is not great, as I have told you already ; but such as it is, it is all on your side. Provided,” she concluded with a searching look, “ that this ‘ angel ’ keeps free from mortal sin ! I have heard his name cried out to-night by voices that were unworthy of him.”

“ Oh, Madame, he knew nothing about it ! I swear to you ! ”

“ Ah ! My little girl, do not talk to me of affairs of State, of which you are so ignorant as yet. Leave me to sleep a little now, if I can, before they come to dress me ; my eyes are drawn with weariness, and so I think are yours.”

And speaking thus, this gentlest of Queens laid her head upon her pillow, and presently Marie saw her eyes close in the sleep of exhaustion. Whereupon she

rose, and seating herself in a large square arm-chair, covered with tapestry, folded her hands upon her knees, and began to dream upon her melancholy situation; the sight of her sweet benefactress served to comfort her somewhat, and her looks turned frequently towards her sleeping form, while inwardly she solicited all the blessings that love bestows on those that give it shelter; while from time to time she would bend down and kiss her fair glistening curls, as though the mere touch of her lips would serve to waft her grateful thoughts within her Sovereign's troubled soul.

CHAPTER III

CONFUSION

ON the morning of this very day, which has already shown us two such different scenes within the precincts of the Court, all the peace and calm of abstract thought might have been found within the small library of a large house close to the Palais de Justice. A copper lamp, of Gothic design, was struggling with the light of dawn, and throwing its red glow upon a mass of papers and books scattered around a large table; it also lit up a bust of L'Hospital, another of Montaigne, one of the historian de Thou, and one of Louis XIII.; while a chimney, large enough for a man to seat himself in, was filled with burning logs of wood, stacked around two large steel dogs. On one of these rested the foot of de Thou, the book-worm, buried assiduously in the latest works of Descartes and Grotius, while on his knee he scribbled notes on these philosophical and political works which at that time formed the subject of every conversation. His attention at the moment was directed to the "Metaphysical Meditations"; the works of this philosopher from Touraine enchanted the young lawyer. More than once, he would smite the book with his fist,

with enthusiastic exclamations, then turn towards a globe placed at his side, and revolving it slowly in his fingers would remain plunged in a scientific reverie ; then, overcome by the profundity of such thoughts as these, he would suddenly throw himself on his knees before the crucifix placed above the chimney-piece, having encountered God Himself at the extremity of all human thought. After which he would lie buried in his great armchair, with his hands over his eyes following in his mind the trend of reasoning of René Descartes, something as follows :

“ Supposing that we are fast asleep, and that all the details of our daily life, such as opening our eyes, moving our head, stretching out our arms, are nothing but false illusions. . . . One thing alone remains unshakeable : that the idea of God, like the idea of my own self, is born in me from the hour of my birth. And surely there is nothing strange in the fact that God, in shaping me, has implanted this conception within me, much as the workman leaves his mark upon the object he has manufactured.”

The mind of the young lawyer was entirely filled with thoughts of this kind, when suddenly a great noise arose underneath his windows ; thinking some neighbouring house must be on fire, he hastily glanced in the direction of the wing occupied by his mother and sisters ; but everything there seemed perfectly quiet, and the very chimneys without a trace of smoke, for which he uttered a prayer of thanks, and running to a window on the other side, beheld the crowd we have already seen making its way along the narrow streets leading towards the quay. Having examined this troop of women and children, and the fantastic emblem under which they marched—“ Some popular fête or carnival procession, probably,” thought de Thou—and seated himself once more in his corner by the fire-place searching through the leaves of an almanac to see what particular saint was being celebrated that day. Having solved the problem to his satisfaction in favour of Saint Barbara, he once

more resumed his studies, only rising occasionally to take some book down from his shelves from which he would read a phrase, a line, or even a word, and then cast it aside on the table near by, or on the floor already cumbered with books and papers, none of which would he stop to put back in their places for fear of breaking the thread of his thoughts.

All at once the door opened and a man was announced—a name well known to him at the Bar, and with whom he had already had a certain amount of personal relationship.

“Why,” cried de Thou, “what can be the cause of a visit from M. Fournier at five o’clock in the morning? Have you discovered some unhappy man in urgent need of a defence or another flagrant wrong to be redressed? Or have you come to inform me of the last humiliation of our poor Parliament? I fear our ancient institutions of the time of Clovis are put out of countenance these days by secret machinations, and the days of constitutional government lost to us for ever unless we can find, without delay, a few more men like you!”

“You praise me more than I deserve, monsieur,” replied the lawyer, entering the room together with a grave and elderly man, wrapped, like himself, in a large cloak. “And, as a matter of fact, you have every reason to regard me with reproach, as I am on the verge of repudiating my actions together with M. de Lude here. We have come to ask you for a refuge for the day.”

“Refuge? Against what?” cried de Thou, drawing up chairs for his guests.

“Against all the scum of the city who acclaim us as their leaders, and from whom we are endeavouring to escape. It is too hateful; the sight of them, the smell of them . . . the very touch of them . . . it is beyond endurance,” declared M. de Lude, with a gravity almost ludicrous. “Past all human endurance.”

“All human endurance?” queried de Thou, intensely astonished, but doing his best to disguise the fact.

“Yes,” replied the lawyer. “Strictly between our-

selves, Monsieur. M. le Grand is going a little too far."

"Yes. He is trying to force the pace and will end in ruining all our plans," added his companion.

"Indeed? That really is your opinion?" asked de Thou, more and more at a loss. And he rubbed his chin with an air of profound thought.

It was three months since Cinq-Mars had been to see him, while he himself, knowing his friend to be at Saint Germain, highly in favour with the King, had been too much of a recluse to hear much news about the Court. Immersed as he was in his studies, public events only reached his ears when sufficiently noised abroad; indeed, contemporary life passed him by to such an extent that he was frequently the cause of infinite mirth to his most intimate friends—the more so as, from a slight feeling of personal pride he liked to appear as a man acquainted with all the latest news, and would make the most heroic efforts to conceal his astonishment at each new fact brought before his notice. This was very much the case at the present moment; and his pride was re-inforced on this occasion by a feeling of friendship; he preferred not to admit that Cinq-Mars had been negligent towards him, and for the very honour of his friend, desired to appear acquainted with all his projects.

"You know the position, of course?" queried the lawyer.

"Of course. Do go on."

"Closely connected with him as you are, you must be aware of the way we have planned the past year. . . ."

"By all means—last year's plans, yes—do go on——"

"And I hope you will agree with us, monsieur, that M. le Grand is mistaken on this particular point. . . ."

"Yes—yes—I should not be surprised—but do please explain——"

"You know of the agreement entered into at the last conference? He will have told you, of course."

"Yes—at least—that is—do forgive me—I think I

know what you are alluding to— but if you would just give me a hint—— ”

“ Oh, no need for that. You cannot possibly have forgotten what he recommended to us himself at the house of Marion Delorme ? ”

“ To make no further additions to our list,” said M. de Lude.

“ Oh yes, of course—of course—— ” said de Thou. “ And I thought it reasonable— most reasonable—— ”

“ Well,” pursued Fournier, “ it is he himself who has broken this agreement, for only this morning I saw, besides all the riff-raff collected together by that little ferret of a Gondi, a certain vagabond captain who spent the whole night distributing blows with his sword and his fist amongst the gentlemen of both parties, and crying at the top of his voice : ‘ Here’s to you, Aubijoux ! That will pay you for those three thousand ducats you won from me at cards ! And that for you, La Chapelle ! Ten drops of your good blood in exchange for my ten pistoles ! ’ And with my own eyes I saw him fall on these gentlemen and several others besides, openly enough, of a truth, for all his blows were given in front, but with the utmost enjoyment, and the most revolting impartiality.”

“ Yes, monsieur, and I was just going to tell him what I thought of him,” went on de Lude, “ when he vanished into the crowd like a squirrel, and there he was laughing with a lot of dark-faced fellows whom I did not know. And I do not doubt it was M. Cinq-Mars that sent him, for he was giving orders to Ambrosio, whom I expect you know—that worthless Spanish prisoner, who is now his servant. Upon my faith, I am disgusted with the whole affair, and I will not undertake to be mixed up with such a rabble.”

“ This is a very different thing, monsieur,” continued Fournier, “ from the affair at Loudon. This was a riot, not a revolt, while in the other place it was all the best part of the population, infuriated at a murder and not merely excited by money and drink. You would have

thought the sewers of Paris had all been opened. I must confess I am very weary of all the things I see going on around me, and I have come here to beg of you to speak to M. le Grand about it."

De Thou was very ill at ease during the whole of this conversation, and trying in vain to imagine Cinq-Mars's motive for mixing himself up with these people in such a way. On the other hand, he was determined not to give away his own ignorance of the matter, which was about as complete as it could be. Since the last time he had met his friend, Cinq-Mars had spoken of nothing but the King's horses and stables, of the latest methods of falconry, and the importance of the Chief Huntsman in the affairs of State—all of which seemed to have little enough to do with vast political conceptions. Finally he ventured to remark timidly:

"I give you my word, gentlemen, that I will do as you ask. Meanwhile, my bed and board are at your disposal for any length of time you require. As for my opinion in the matter, I find it rather difficult to form. By the way—why was the feast of Saint Barbara being celebrated to-day?"

"Saint Barbara?" cried Fournier.

"Saint Barbara?" echoed de Lude.

"Oh, he means that lavish display of gunpowder!" cried Fournier, laughing in spite of himself. "Truly, it is sufficiently amusing from one point of view. You may well say Saint Barbara has had her fill of celebrations!"

This time de Thou was reduced to silence by the force of sheer astonishment, while they, seeing that there was some misunderstanding between them, were also at a loss how to continue.

In the midst of this silence the door opened to admit Abbé Quillet, the old tutor of Cinq-Mars. He limped a little as he walked, and all his ancient merriment was now transformed into an air of care and responsibility. He looked at them keenly, and then began to speak with great rapidity.

"Forgive me, my dear Thou, for disturbing you at your work at this hour of the day. Amazing is it not, on the part of a gouty old fellow like me? Time tells . . . time tells . . . I was not limping like this two years ago . . . On the contrary, I was as brisk and nimble as might be during my journey in Italy. It is true that fear gives us legs!"

Whereupon he threw himself into an arm-chair, and signing to de Thou to come close to him, he continued in a whisper:

"Let me tell you, as one of his friends. It was I who betrothed them, a couple of weeks ago, as no doubt he has told you!"

"Indeed?" exclaimed poor de Thou, falling from Charybdis to Scylla, into a still worse state of amazed bewilderment.

"Why all this surprise? You know perfectly whom I mean," continued the Abbé. "But, by my faith, I fear now that I have been too far persuaded by them—but then their love for one another made them so hard to withstand. I fear for him more than for her. I believe he is behaving foolishly, after what has been happening this morning. We must take council in the matter."

"But," said de Thou, with the utmost gravity, "I am afraid I do not quite follow you. Who is acting foolishly?"

"My dear fellow! Why put on all these airs of mystery with me? I should never have expected it of you!" And the old man began to lose his temper.

"Oh, believe me, I meant nothing of the kind. But whom have you betrothed?"

"Again? Come, come, monsieur!"

"And what is this riot you all keep speaking of?"

"You are trifling with me. I will go," replied the Abbé, getting up.

"I swear to you that I understand nothing that has been said to me this morning. Is it M. Cinq-Mars you are speaking of?"

"My very good sir, since you are pleased to treat me as though I were a Cardinalist, I will take my leave of you," declared the little Abbé, furious. And, picking up his crutched stick, he went out rapidly, despite the protests of de Thou, who followed him to his coach, trying his hardest to appease him, but without the slightest success, since he dare not mention Cinq-Mars by name on the staircase before his servants, and could therefore explain nothing. So he had to suffer the mortification of seeing the old Abbé depart in a rage, crying out to him to come again later as the coach rolled off, and its occupant made no reply.

Nevertheless, it was as well for him to have descended the steps of his house, for he saw at the bottom a hideous group of folk returning from the Louvre, and was able to judge of the importance of the night's riot. Coarse voices were shouting in triumph :

"Our little Queen looked out on us from her balcony, that she did!" "Long life to the Duc de Bouillon, who has come to help us, sailing down the Seine in his own raft, with a hundred thousand men!" "The old Cardinal of la Rochelle is dead!" "Long live the King!" "Long live Monsieur le Grand!"

The shouting increased on the arrival of a four-horse coach driven by men wearing the King's livery, which stopped before de Thou's door. He recognised it as the carriage of Cinq-Mars, and saw Ambrosio leap down to draw aside the large curtains peculiar to all the coaches of that day. Such was the crowd of people swarming around him that Cinq-Mars had the utmost difficulty in descending and ridding himself of the numerous market-women, all clamouring to kiss him, while they cried: "Welcome to our little friend, come to visit us at last!" "See how fine he is, with his big lace collar!" "Better than the old devil with the white moustache!" "Give us some more good wine, little friend-of-the-people, like the stuff we had this morning!"

Henri d'Effiat blushed while he grasped the hand of his friend who was rapidly closing the large doors.

"This popular favour is a cup that has to be drunk," remarked he as he entered the house.

De Thou regarded him gravely. "You certainly seem to be drinking it to the dregs," was his answer.

"I can explain all this tumult to you," replied Cinq-Mars, somewhat embarrassed. "For the moment, if you are still my friend, dress quickly, and come with me to attend the Queen at her toilet."

"I have promised to follow you blindly," said the young judge, "but it cannot last for ever at the expense of my good faith."

"Believe me, I will tell you everything so soon as we are back from the Court, but you must make haste, for it is ten o'clock already."

"I will come with you," de Thou promised, showing him into his study where Fournier and de Lude were still seated.

And he himself withdrew into another room.

CHAPTER IV

THE TOILET

THE coach of the Master of the Horse was rolling rapidly in the direction of the Louvre, when, drawing close the heavy curtains and taking his friend's hands in his own, he said to him with much feeling :

"My dear de Thou, I have been keeping heavy secrets locked within my breast, and believe me, they have not weighed lightly there ; but two reasons forced me to keep silence ; I was afraid both of the danger you might incur yourself, and the advice you might see fit to give to me."

"You know very well," replied de Thou, "how far I despise the first ; and I imagined that you would not altogether despise the second."

"No—but none the less, I fear it. I do not want to

be frustrated. Do not speak to me, de Thou, I beg of you not to say one word until you have heard and seen what is about to happen. I will come back to your house after leaving the Louvre; and there I will listen to what you have to say before starting off again on my mission—for I warn you nothing will shake my purpose. I have just been saying so to your two friends.”

In Cinq-Mars's voice there was none of the harshness which his words implied; his tone was tender, his expression gentle and full of friendship, while his manner was calm and perfectly determined. He seemed to be absolute master of himself. De Thou noticed this and shivered.

“Alas!” said he to himself as they descended from their coach to go into the Louvre.

When they entered the Queen's apartments, ushered in by two officials, all in black with ebony staves, she was already engaged at her toilet in front of a table of dark wood, inlaid with tortoise-shell and mother-of-pearl, in the centre of which was a round mirror, which Society ladies of to-day would condemn as mean and paltry; around it were scattered a few jewels and necklaces. Anne of Austria, in a large arm-chair of crimson velvet trimmed with golden fringe, sat grave and motionless as on a throne, while Dona Stephania and Madame de Motteville, stood one on either side of her, putting the finishing touches to her hair, already exquisitely dressed, with pearls interwoven among the golden locks, as soft and delicate as spun silk. The light of day fell full upon the radiant whiteness of her forehead; her blue eyes, tinged with a shade of green, were large and regular, and her mouth, soft and sweet, possessed the slightly prominent under lip characteristic of all her family. This feature is to be noticed in all the portraits of that period, as though artists had taken pains to imitate the royal mouth, in accordance with the Queen's waiting women, who one and all aspired to look like her. The dark dresses, affected by the Court at that period, even the cut of which was decreed by law, served to

accentuate the ivory whiteness of her arms, bare to the elbow, and adorned with a profusion of lace falling from the large sleeves. Large pearls hung from her ears, and a cluster of pearls of a larger size was placed on her bosom, and fastened thence to her girdle. Such was the outward appearance of the Queen at this moment. At her feet, on a couple of velvet cushions, sat a child of four years old, playing with a little cannon, which he was engaged in taking to pieces ; this was the Dauphin, later Louis XIV. Marie of Mantua was seated on a footstool on her right, while the other ladies of her suite, all of them young, or brilliant, or beautiful, remained standing behind her. In an angle of the window, Monsieur, with his hat under his arm, was talking softly to a tall stout man with a red face and a bold stare : this was the Duc de Bouillon. A smart young officer, of pleasing appearance, had just been submitting various papers to the Prince, and the Duc de Bouillon was engaged in explaining them.

M. de Thou, having saluted the Queen, and received a few words in reply, approached the Princess de Guemenée and spoke softly to her, in a tone of friendly intimacy ; but throughout the dialogue he never ceased to scrutinise the Princess Marie, with all the close attention given by a mother to the girl her son has chosen as his life's partner. He believed her to be familiar with the schemes of Cinq-Mars, and it was with regret he now observed the elaborateness of her toilette, as denoting more vanity than such an occasion befitted. She was occupying her time in arranging the rubies on her brow and in her hair, even their lustre failing to dim the lovely glow of her complexion ; her glances frequently strayed in the direction of Cinq-Mars, apparently animated rather by coquetry than by love, and always her eyes returned to her own reflection in the mirror in front of her which, it must be admitted, was well worth the contemplation. De Thou began to believe that his suspicions were unfounded, especially when he remarked how the Queen seemed glad to have her sitting next her side, though all

her other ladies stood behind her chair, and not infrequently were regarded with some haughtiness. "In this heart of nineteen summers," said the man to himself, "love reigns alone, and the delight of the present moment. No. It is not she."

After the two friends had spoken a few subdued words to each person present, the Queen made an almost imperceptible gesture towards Madame de Guemenée, and upon this sign all the women—with the exception of Marie—withdrew, with deep curtsies, as though according to previous arrangement, whereupon the Queen turned in her chair towards Monsieur and addressed him thus :

"Will not my brother come and sit beside me here? We can then take council together on this all-important subject. The Princess Marie will stay here at my request, and we need not fear to be interrupted."

The Queen's manner seemed to have become less ceremonious, and abandoning her usual attitude of frigid formality, she motioned to the other occupants of the room to draw near her presence.

Gaston d'Orleans proceeded to seat himself on her right, with an air of affected indifference, and fiddling with his ruff and his chain of the Order of the Holy Ghost, round his neck, began with a half smile :

"To my thinking, Madame, it would be best not to weary such very young ears with tedious discussions; I dare swear they would be far more ready to listen to dancing talk, or even wedding talk—concerning an Elector, for example, or a King of Poland."

Marie glanced at him scornfully, and Cinq-Mars frowned.

"I can assure you," replied the Queen, looking down at the girl, "that she takes the greatest interest in the politics of the day. Do not try to run away from us, brother," she added with a smile, "for to-day I have got you in my clutches. At least we must hear what M. de Bouillon has got to say."

The latter now approached, leading by the hand the young officer of whom we have already spoken.

"First of all," said he, "allow me to present to Your Majesty the Baron de Beauvau, recently arrived from Spain."

"From Spain?" said the Queen, with some emotion. "Then he is a brave man. Has he seen my family there?"

"He will speak to you of them, as well as of the Comte duc d'Olivares. As for courage, this is not the first time that he has shown what he is made of. You must know that he was in command of the Curassiers of the Comte de Soissons."

"Indeed? At your age, Monsieur? You seem to have a taste for political warfare."

"On the contrary, I have to implore Your Majesty's pardon," replied the young man, "for I was serving with the 'Princes of the Peace.'"

Anne of Austria smiled, recalling the name adopted by the conquerors of the Marfée. The Duc de Bouillon, seizing this opportunity to submit the important question that he had in mind, abandoned Cinq-Mars, whom he had just been shaking effusively by the hand, and drawing near to the Queen:

"It is a theme for wonder, Madame," said he, "that the age in which we live continues to give birth to a few rare spirits such as these"—designating the Squire-in-Chief, together with young Beauvau and de Thou—"and it is in them alone, for the future, that we can repose our trust, for the scythe of the Great Leveller has made them very few and far between."

"Is it of Father Time that you are speaking?" asked the Queen, "or some real personage?"

"Too real indeed, Madame, and far too much alive," replied the Duke with increasing animation. "Such boundless ambition and superhuman egoism is no longer to be endured. All men worthy of the name are indignant at this yoke, and never have misfortunes been more clearly predicted. Allow me to speak plainly to you, Madame. This is no longer a time for circumspection. The King's condition is most grave. The

moment has arrived for thought and resolution, and the time for great decisions is at hand."

Anne of Austria, being accustomed to the brusque severe tone of M. de Bouillon, showed no surprise; but never having known him roused to emotion before, she was forced to feel a little uneasiness within herself. It was in a more serious tone of voice that she replied: "Well? What is it you fear, and what do you propose to do?"

"I fear nothing on my own account, Madame, for the army in Italy or Sedan will always afford me a refuge. But I fear on your behalf—and maybe, for the princes, your sons."

"For my children, M. le Duc? For the sons of France? Do you hear, him brother? Do you hear what he is saying? And you express no surprise?" The Queen's agitation as she spoke this was apparent.

"No, Madame," declared Gaston of Orleans, with the utmost calm. "You know how accustomed I am to every kind of persecution. Nothing would surprise me on the part of this man. He is the master. We must submit."

"He is the master?" exclaimed the Queen. "And from whom does he receive his power if not from the King? If that hand is withdrawn, what is to prevent his utter downfall?"

"He himself will prevent it," interrupted M. de Bouillon, "for he means to become Regent, and I know that at this very moment he is plotting to remove your children from you and to get the King's permission for their sole charge."

"Take my children away!" exclaimed the Queen, involuntarily putting her arms around the little Dauphin. The child, standing between his mother's knees, looked at the men surrounding him with a gravity strange in a baby of that age, and beholding the Queen weeping, placed his hand on the little sword at his side.

"Ah, Monseigneur," said the Duc de Bouillon gently, stooping towards him, in order that the Queen might

overhear his words, "there is no need for you to draw your sword against us, but rather against the force that is uprooting your throne. You will have much power, doubtless, and the sceptre you wield shall be absolute, but the force of arms that maintained it has been broken for ever—and that was our old nobility that has been utterly destroyed. When you are King, you will be a great monarch—or so I predict; but you will have subjects rather than friends, for friendship is only born out of independence, and a sort of equality which has its being in strength. Your ancestors had their equals—but you will have nothing of the kind. May Heaven preserve you, Monseigneur, for we men can do nothing without our institutions. Be great and powerful, and may your successors be equally great, for, things being as they are, should one of them but tremble, the monarchy will crumble all to pieces."

The Duc de Bouillon had a warmth of conviction which never failed to captivate his hearers. His valour, his grasp of a battle, the depth of his political insight, his knowledge of European affairs, and above all his temperament, so full of thought as well as decision, all combined to make him one of the most forceful personalities of his age, and the only man ever feared by the Cardinal Duke. The Queen always listened to him with the utmost confidence and had allowed him to gain a sort of ascendancy over her. Her emotion now visibly increased.

"Please, God," cried she, "that my son may have the character to understand your words, and the strength to profit by them. But till that time comes, I stand in place of him. It is my place to be Regent, and only mine. I will die sooner than relinquish my right. If we must have a war, then war there must be, for there is nothing I will not consent to rather than deliver the future Louis XIV. to this crowned vassal! I mean it," she continued, with flushed face, and holding the Dauphin tight in her arms. "And now, my brother, and you, gentlemen, give me your advice. Let us consult to-

gether. Where were we? Or would you rather I left you alone? Do not be afraid to say so. As woman and wife, I was ready to weep for the pity of my estate, but as mother, you will not see me shed one tear. If necessary, I myself am ready to give you orders!"

Never had Anne of Austria seemed more beautiful than at this moment, and all those near her were now infected by her enthusiasm, and waited but a sign from her to speak. The Duc de Bouillon cast a rapid glance at Monsieur, who was the first to break the silence:

"On my faith," said he, with an air of deliberation, "if we are going to be under your commands, my sister, I would wish to be a captain in your Guards, for of a truth, I am weary of being humiliated by this miserable man, who has even dared to interfere with my marriage, and confines my friends in the Bastille, where they perish one by one. And above all I am incensed," continued he solemnly, gazing downwards at the floor, "I am incensed at the misery of our poor people."

"My brother," replied the Princess quickly, "I take you at your word, and hope that between us we shall prove a tower of strength. Follow the example of M. le Comte de Soissons, but see that you live to profit by your victory. Comport yourself as you did with M. de Montmorency—but see, this time, that you cross the moat!"

Gaston winced at the allusion. No need to remind him of the unfortunate rebel Castelnau, who had cleared a large ditch unaided, to be faced on the other side with seventeen wounds, imprisonment, and death, all in the sight of Monsieur, standing motionless as his own army. The Queen talked so rapidly that he had not the time to decide how far this stab had been intended, though he thought it best to make no reply. Nor, indeed, had he the chance, for she turned to Cinq-Mars, and continued:

"But, above all, no panicking or terror. Let us view our situation calmly. Monsieur le Grand, you have just left His Majesty. Have we cause for fear?"

D'Effiat had never ceased looking at Marie of Mantua, whose expressive face conveyed her sentiments to him better than any words could do. He read in it the desire to hear him speak ; the intention of forcing a decision on Monsieur and the Queen. An impatient movement of her foot was read by him as an order to take matters into his own hands and establish the conspiracy. He thought hard, and his face grew pale, for he realised that the hour of his destiny had struck. De Thou watched him apprehensively, knowing his nature only too well. He longed to speak to him, if only to say one word ; but Cinq-Mars had already raised his head and begun to talk :

“ I am of opinion, Madame,” that the King’s condition is better than you have been led to understand, and I hope and believe that God will spare us our Prince for some time to come. It is true he suffers, and suffers considerably, but it is his soul that is sick with a malady nothing can cure—a sickness one would not wish to see in one’s worst enemy, and that would rouse pity in all the world, could they but witness it. His disease is entirely a moral one ; a great revolution is taking place in his heart, and he is unable to cope with it. For years he has been feeling within himself the germs of a righteous hatred against the man to whom he thinks his gratitude is due, and it is this inward conflict between anger and his own kindness which is devouring his strength. He longs to punish ; then, all of a sudden he will stop, and weep to think of it. Could you but see him thus, Madame, you would feel nothing but compassion. I have seen him seize the pen to write the words of exile against this man’s name, and then use it—for what ? To write him a complimentary letter. As a Christian, he applauds his own charity ; as a Monarch he despises his weakness. He will take refuge in prayer, and meditations on the future life, and then rise, terrified, for he has seen the flames this man deserves in Hell, and no man knows better than himself the reasons for his damnation. If you could hear him at these moments,

weeping for his own feebleness, and crying how he will be punished himself for being unable to inflict punishment ! I have even thought at times he is haunted by ghosts commanding him to strike, for frequently he will stretch his arms out as he sleeps. And thus, Madame, the storm seethes within his heart, but burns no one but himself ; the lightning is imprisoned and cannot escape."

"We must make it escape," cried the Duc de Bouillon.

"It is death to him who touches it," said Monsieur.

"But what a death !" murmured the Queen.

"How I should admire that man," whispered Marie, softly.

"That man will be me," said Cinq-Mars.

"Us," whispered de Thou in his ear.

Young Beauvau had now drawn close to the Duc de Bouillon. "Monsieur," said he, "have you forgotten the rest ?"

"'Struth no ; I have not forgotten it !" he replied in a low voice. And, addressing the Queen :

"Accept the offer of M. le Grand, Madame. He is at hand to decide the King in a way we cannot do, but be prepared for all things, for the Cardinal is far too wily to take things sleeping. I do not believe in this illness of his ; nor do I believe in the silence and inactivity he has been trying to impose upon us for the past two years. Let us hurry things on and await results. I was showing my plans to Monsieur a few moments ago ; I will sum them up for you in a few words. I would put Sedan at the disposal of you and your sons. The army in Italy is mine to command, and I can recall it at will. Monsieur, the Master-of-the-Horse, rules over half the camp at Perpignan. All the old Huguenots of la Rochelle and the South are ready to gather round him at the first signal. For the past year I have been organising all things with a view to this happening."

"I would have no hesitation," replied the Queen, "in placing myself and my sons in your hands should

anything happen to His Majesty. But in this general plan you are forgetting Paris."

"Paris is with us on every side. The people, on behalf of the Archbishop, whether they know it or not, and also through M. de Beaufort, their idol; and the army, so far as concerns your own Guards and those of Monsieur, who will be in command of all, if such is his good pleasure."

"I! I! Oh, but that is out of the question! I have not enough people at my disposal, and I should need a refuge far stronger than Sedan," insisted Gaston.

"Her Majesty finds it sufficient," remarked M. de Bouillon.

"Ah, that may be, but my sister runs far less risk than a man who draws his sword in active combat. Do you know we are doing an extremely rash thing?"

"Even with the King on our side?" enquired Anne of Austria.

"Indeed, Madame, yes, for one never knows how long that will last. We must have a certain pledge of security, and I intend to do nothing without the Spanish treaty."

"Very well then—nothing you must do," said the Queen, flushing up, "for I will hear nothing of any such proposal."

"Ah, Madame, it would be a wiser course, and in that Monsieur is right," said the Duc de Bouillon. "For the Comte-duc de San-Lucar has offered us seventeen thousand men, all trained soldiers, and five hundred thousand crowns into the bargain."

"What?" cried the Queen in amazement. "They have dared to bring things to such a pitch without my consent? To treat with foreigners!"

"Foreigners, my sister? Can we believe that word on the lips of a Spanish Princess?" replied Gaston.

Anne of Austria rose to her feet, taking the Dauphin by the hand, and supporting herself on Marie's shoulder.

"Yes, Monsieur," she cried, "it is true I am a Spanish woman, but I am also the grand-daughter of Charles V.,

and know that a sovereign's country lies at the feet of her throne. I will leave you, gentlemen, to continue without me. From henceforth, the less I know the better." She took several steps towards the door, but seeing Marie trembling and sobbing by her side, came back again.

"I will promise you most faithfully to respect your secret, but nothing further!"

This took her hearers somewhat by surprise, with the exception of the Duc de Bouillon, who, determined to lose no advantage, bowed low to her and said:

"We are grateful to you for your promise, Madame, and could wish nothing better, being persuaded that after we have carried out our scheme successfully, we may count on your support."

Not wishing to embark further on a war of words, the Queen bowed, somewhat frigidly, and went out with Marie, who bestowed a glance on Cinq-Mars fraught with every emotion of the human soul in love. In her lovely eyes he thought to read the eternal fatal sacrifice of a devoted woman, and he decided within himself that should he now withdraw his hand from the plough, he would indeed be the most miserable of men. As soon as the two women had left the room:

"La, la, la—what did I tell you, Bouillon?" cried Monsieur. "You have angered the Queen by going too far. At any rate, no one can accuse me of half-heartedness this morning. On the contrary, I have been a good deal firmer than I had any right to be."

"Her Majesty has filled me with happiness and gratitude," replied M. de Bouillon with an air of triumph, "and the future is ours. What do you propose to do, M. Cinq-Mars?"

"I have already told you, monsieur, that nothing will make me draw back now. Whatever the consequences, I will see the King, and expose myself to any danger to receive his orders."

"And the Spanish treaty?"

"Yes, I——"

Whereon de Thou seized his friend's arm, and coming forward suddenly, with an air of great solemnity, began to speak :

" We have already decided it shall not be signed until after the interview with the King, for if the just wrath of His Majesty renders such a step unnecessary, so much the better. There will then be no need to expose such a dangerous arrangement to the risk of discovery."

M. de Bouillon frowned. " If I did not know M. de Thou," said he, " I should take that as evincing a lack of spirit. But, coming from him—— "

" Monsieur," replied the judge, " you can rely on me implicitly to act in accordance with M. le Grand. We are inseparable friends."

Cinq-Mars looked at his comrade and was astonished to see the look of despair on his sweet gentle face—so astonished, that he had not the power to contradict him.

" He is right, gentlemen," said he simply, with a distant smile. " Let us hope His Majesty's behaviour will spare us to some purpose. I have no little influence over him. And for the rest, gentlemen, and M. le Duc," he continued, in a voice of the utmost resolution, " do not imagine for one moment that I shall go back on my words. I have burned all my boats and must continue to press forward. The Cardinal must fall, or my head will be the consequence."

" It is strange, extremely strange," said Monsieur. " You all seem to have gone so much further in this conspiracy than I had any idea of."

" Nothing of the kind, Monsieur," replied the Duc de Bouillon. " It is for us to prepare and you to accept. Bear in mind that there is nothing in writing, and you have only to speak the word to annul all that has gone before. It is for you to create either a dream or an eruption, according to your desire."

" That being the case, I am well content," said Gaston. " And now let us turn to more agreeable matters. Thanks be to God, we have still plenty of time before us, though for my part, I could wish the whole thing already

accomplished. I am not made for these violent emotions—my health is not strong enough to stand them”—and he took M. de Beauvau by the arm. “Come, young gallant from Spain, tell us if the Spanish women are as pretty as they used to be! They tell me you are quite a ladies’ man! Faith, but I hear you are the subject of much conversation over there! And do the little dears still wear those enormous hoops? Well, well, I cannot say I altogether disapprove! It makes their little feet look smaller and more adorable than ever. But I am quite sure the wife of Don Louis de Haro is not more beautiful than Madame de Guemenée—eh? Tell me the truth, for I have heard she now adopts the manners of a nun. Ah! You are too embarrassed to reply. Either the lady has regarded you with a favourable eye, or you fear to offend our friend M. de Thou here, by comparisons with his charming friend. Well, well . . . manners above everything. I hear the King has a most delectable dwarf? Is it true that they serve him up baked in a pasty? What a happy monarch he does sound! I have never been able to find one as fortunate as that. And the Queen—is she still served by all her people on bended knee? A very excellent custom, by the way, which we have lost—more’s the pity!”

And thus Gaston of Orleans rambled on, for the space of half-an-hour, to this young officer—far too serious-minded on his side to reciprocate in the same vein, and still greatly under the impression of the scenes just witnessed. Except for a few casual words, he offered no reply, and continued to regard the Duc de Bouillon with an air of astonished incredulity, as though demanding whether this was really the man about to be placed at the head of the boldest enterprise conceived for many a day. The Prince, meanwhile, preferring to ignore his lack of answers, framed his own replies, talking rapidly, and dragging his victim with him into the next room. He was afraid lest any bold person should again re-open the tender subject of the treaty; but even the Duc de Bouillon was reduced to a sulky silence. As for Cinq-

Mars, he was carried away by de Thou, who took the opportunity of this incessant babble to escape without Monsieur being aware of it.

CHAPTER V

THE SECRET

DE THOU was now in his own house with his friend, with the door of his room carefully closed, and orders given to admit nobody, and to excuse him to his two refugee friends should they chance to depart without seeing him again. But, up to now, not a word had passed between him and Cinq-Mars.

The judge was sunk deep within his arm-chair, lost in thought. Cinq-Mars, seated in the chimney corner, waited silently and gravely for him to break the silence. All at once de Thou, looking at him fixedly and folding his arms, said in a gloomy voice :

“ So it has come to this ! So much for ambition and its consequences ! You are about to send a man into exile, or probably to kill him, and introduce a foreign army into France—thus appearing in the double light of assassin and traitor to your country. By what devious routes have you arrived at such a goal ? And what downward path can have led you to such depths ? ”

“ No man but you would speak twice to me in such a way as this,” replied Cinq-Mars, coldly. “ But I know you, and am glad of the chance of an explanation. Indeed I both wished and provoked it, and I mean to bare my soul before you completely, though, first of all, I had another idea in mind, and one perhaps more worthy of our friendship—friendship, the most precious thing, save one, on earth.”

And he raised his eyes to Heaven, as though seeking the very spirit of which he spoke.

“ Yes, it would have been the better way. I had

meant to tell you nothing ; it would have been difficult, but up to now I had succeeded. I wished to form the whole scheme without you, and only reveal it to you in its perfect state ; it was my great desire to keep you out of my danger zone. But, shall I confess a weakness to you ? I feared to die, if die I must, with your bad opinion. Up to now I can tolerate reproaches from the world at large, but not from you ; and therefore I decided to tell you everything."

"What ? And but for this idea you would have had the strength of mind to hide yourself from me for ever ? My dear Henri, what have I ever done to you that you should regard me like this ? By what fault of mine have I deserved to survive, if you should happen to be killed ? You have been obstinate enough to deceive me now for two whole years ; you have only showed me the sunny side of your life, and always you have appeared before me with a smiling face, hot from some new mark of favour. Ah ! This was either great of you or very very small ! "

"Do not impute false motives to me. It is true that I deceived you, but that was the only joy I had in life. Forgive me for stealing a few moments from my destiny which seemed, alas, so brilliant. . My only joy was your belief in my happiness, and my only fault in allowing it to be destroyed, and revealing myself to you as I really am. Listen to me ; I will not keep you long. The story of an ardent desire is perforce a simple one. Do you remember that time in the tent, when I was wounded ? My secret came near to escaping me that time, and maybe it had been better so. And yet, what good would your advice have done me ? I should not have followed it. In short, I love Marie Gonzague."

"Indeed ? The future Queen of Poland ? "

"She will not be queen while I am alive. Listen to me. For her sake I came to Court ; for her sake I have come near to ruling France ; and for her sake I shall most probably fail and die."

"Die ? Fail ? Just when I was reproaching you

with your triumphal progress? And bemoaning the tragedy of your victory?"

"Ah, how little you know me if you imagine I am duped by Fortune each time she smiles upon me. Do you really think I have not seen through my destiny? I struggle against it, but it is stronger than I am. I know it to be so. I have undertaken a task beyond all human power, and I shall die in the attempt."

"What? And you have no power to stop yourself? Then what is the good of human understanding?"

"No good whatever, unless to make us clearly see the reasons for our undoing, even as we perish. I cannot draw back now. When one is faced with a foe like Richelieu, either he must be destroyed or I must die. To-morrow I shall strike the decisive blow. Did I not commit myself to it just now in your presence?"

"It is this very pledge of yours I protest against! What confidence have you got in these people to whom you are committed? Can you not read their secret thoughts?"

"I have read them all. I have read all their hopes beneath their veil of indignation; I know they tremble, even while they threaten; I know that already they are not averse to making peace, and delivering me as their pledge. But it is for me to support their burden and decide the King. I must, for Marie is pledged to marry me, and my death is already inscribed at Narbonne."

"I am quite clear as to the two alternatives before me. Either the scaffold or supreme happiness. Either I must coerce Fortune or die. My one immediate bliss is that of having finished with uncertainty. And you? Do you not blush at having believed me tainted with a vile ambitious egotism like the Cardinal's? A mere childish desire for power which can never be satisfied! I am ambitious, but love has made me so. Yes, love. That word accounts for all. Ah, but I wrong you. You did idealise my secret intentions, you did attribute noble motives to me—I remember it too well—and

high political conceptions. They are vast and magnificent, no doubt; all the same, let me tell you that these vague attempts to purify a corrupt society seem to me of far less value than the devotion implied by love alone. For when the soul is filled with love and nothing else, it has no room for general speculations on human interest, however fine they be. The uttermost heights of earth are far below those of Heaven."

De Thou bowed his head. "What am I to say?" said he. "I no longer understand you. You are about wilfully to organise disorder, and deliberately calculate misfortune."

"Yes," replied Cinq-Mars, "you have said it. The fire within me serves to increase my strength. I have calculated all things. By slow steps I have arrived at my goal in all its clearness. With Marie's hand to lead me on, how can I draw back now? A whole world could not make me do it. Hitherto all has gone well; but I am hindered by an invisible obstacle, and that is Richelieu. Just now, before you, I undertook to deal with him. Perhaps I was too hasty. I begin to think it now. Let him rejoice in it, then; it was just what he expected. No doubt he counted on the youngest of all being the first to lose patience, and he counted right. All the same, were it not for this potent spirit of love I should be the stronger man, albeit a man of virtue still."

And now a sudden change came over Cinq-Mars's face. He flushed and paled alternately, and the veins stood out on his forehead like blue lines traced by some invisible hand.

"Did you but know," he continued, rising and wringing his hands with despairing emotion, "how all the tortures of love are burning within my breast. This young and timid child, for whom I defy empires, for whose sake I endure everything, even a King's favour (and who, it may be, does not yet know all that it has cost me), is still not mine. She belongs to me in the sight of God, and still I must appear before her as a

stranger, and hear discussed each day, in my presence, which of the thrones in Europe is best suited to her. And I cannot even voice an opinion in the matter, so humble is my state, when even the princes of royal blood are rejected on her behalf. I have to hide myself like a malefactor to listen to the voice of my affianced bride, while in public I must distantly salute her! Her lover and her husband in the shade, and her servant in the light of day! It is asking too much. I cannot endure it! The last step must be taken, which will either ennoble me or cast me down."

"And to achieve your own personal happiness you would wreck the State!"

"The good of the State is bound up with my own. I have achieved it in destroying the King's tyrant. The horror of this man has burned into my very blood. When I first set out to join him, I was brought face to face on my way with his greatest crime—the murder and the torture of Urbain Grandier. This man is the King's evil genius whom I will exorcise. I might even become the King's good genius. That is what Marie believes; it is one of her most cherished thoughts. But I hardly hope to win the tormented soul of our poor Monarch."

"Then what do you hope for?" enquired de Thou.

"For a lucky throw of the dice. If his strength of mind can last but two hours, then I have gained him; it is the last thread on which my fate hangs suspended."

"And Marie's, too?"

"A thousand times no," cried Cinq-Mars impetuously. "If he does not support me, then I shall sign for war and the Spanish treaty!"

"The horror of it!" cried the lawyer. "War! Civil war! And an alliance with foreigners!"

"A crime maybe," replied Cinq-Mars coldly. "But do I ask you to partake of it?"

"Ungrateful boy!" replied his friend. "How can you say a thing like that to me? Do you not know, and have I not proved to you, that friendship is the

thing I cherish most in all the world ? Could I survive not only your death, but even the least of your misfortunes ? But, once for all, I implore you to let me influence you, and prevent you from striking this blow at France, my dear and only friend ! I implore you on my knees not to commit this sin of parricide, and murder our own country ! I call it ours, for nothing shall separate us now. Let me retain my own self-esteem, for which I have striven so hard ; do not sully in this manner both the life and death which I have vowed to your service."

De Thou was now kneeling at the feet of his friend, and Cinq-Mars, unable any longer to preserve his affected coldness, gathered him to his arms, and clasping him to his breast cried in a stifled voice :

" Why do you love me like this ? Old friend, what doom are you bringing upon yourself ? Why should you care for me ? You, who are wise and pure-hearted and virtuous ; you, who never feel the strength of passion and desire for vengeance ; you, whose soul feeds on nothing but knowledge and religion—why love me ? What has my friendship brought to you ? Nothing but grief and pain. And need it now be your undoing ? Break from me while there is time. We are no longer of the same kind ; you see how Court life has corrupted me ; I have no frankness nor kindness of heart left in me ; I am devising the misfortune of a fellow man, and I have learned how to deceive a friend. Forget me ; scorn me if you will ; I am not worth even one of your thoughts, much less your own peril."

" Only if you swear to me never to betray France and the King," replied de Thou. " Do you know that you will be dismembering your own country ? Do you realise that if you once deliver up our strongest places they will pass out of our possession altogether, and that your name will be abhorred by all posterity ? And that French mothers will speak it with a curse, when they are forced to teach their children to speak in a strange tongue ? Come . . ." And he drew him towards a

bust of Louis XIII. "Swear before him (your own friend, too, remember) that you will never sign this infamous compact!"

Cinq-Mars looked downwards, and replied in a voice of the utmost firmness, despite the blush upon his cheek:

"I have already told you. I shall sign it if I am forced to."

De Thou grew pale and relinquished his hand. Twice he walked round the room with folded arms, in a state of mental torment. Finally he walked solemnly up to the bust of his father, and opened a large volume placed at its feet; there he turned up a page, already marked, and read aloud:

"In my opinion M. de Ligneboeuf was justly condemned to death by the Parliament of Rouen for not having revealed Catteville's conspiracy against the State."

Then, holding the book open in his hand and looking reverently up at the image of President de Thou, whose memoirs they were:

"Yes, indeed, my father," he went on, "your thought was right, and I am about to become a criminal deserving of death. But—what other course is left? I have not the power to denounce this traitor, since this too would be treachery, and since he is my friend and a very unhappy man."

Whereupon he went over to Cinq-Mars and took his hand again. "I have done a great deal for you in doing this," said he. "But expect nothing more from me, monsieur, if you sign this treaty."

Cinq-Mars was moved to the depths of his being at this episode, knowing all that it must have cost his friend to repudiate him. But he was still able to conceal the tears in his eyes as he embraced him and replied:

"Ah, de Thou, you are a very perfect man! The best help you can give me is to break from me, for had I known your fate was linked with mine, I could never

have disposed of it so readily, or steeled myself to sacrifice so hard. But as things are I am bound to make it, and once again I tell you that I shall sign the Spanish treaty if I am forced."

CHAPTER VI

THE HUNTING PARTY

THE King's illness had brought about a state of things in France inevitable in any weakly governed country anticipating the death of its sovereign. Although Richelieu was the pivot on which the monarchy turned, his power was all in the name of Louis, and his glory a reflection of the prince's he had helped to consolidate. Notwithstanding his absolute supremacy, he went in fear of his master; and this very fear formed the nation's safeguard against those ambitious schemes to which their sovereign was the only obstacle. Once he was dead, what would this imperious minister not do? Where would a man stop who had dared so much already? Accustomed as he was to wield the sceptre, what was to force him to relinquish it, or prevent him from signing his name in isolation beneath the laws previously dictated by himself? This fear was in all men's minds. In vain the people sought throughout the realm for those giants of the aristocracy at whose feet they had been used to shelter in all political storms; all they found was their freshly-made graves; Parliament itself was dumb, and the feeling grew that no force could withstand the increase of this monstrous power. Not a soul was completely deceived by the pretended sufferings of the minister; not one of them was touched by this affected agony, which had served so often to deceive their hopes, for no amount of distance prevented them from feeling the strong arm of this terrifying son of success.

The people's affection now re-awakened for the son of Henri IV. ; they flocked to the churches to pray for him, and were even found to weep. Unfortunate monarchs are always loved. Louis's melancholy and his mysterious grief aroused the interest of the whole country, and, living as he still was, he was already regretted, as though his subjects longed to know the inward sufferings of one so far above their heads, faced with no future but the grave.

The King, desirous of re-assuring his entire realm, announced a temporary improvement in his health, and desired his Court to prepare for a large hunting-party given at the royal domain of Chambord, at the express desire of his brother, the Duc d'Orleans.

This beautiful place was the King's favourite retreat. Probably its grandeur and its sadness made a double appeal to his own temperament. Often he would withdraw there for months at a time without seeing a soul, reading and re-reading mysterious papers, and writing secret articles, all of which were kept in an iron chest, of which he alone had the key. At times it was his pleasure to be served by one single servant, thereby forgetting his own personality in the absence of his suite, living for a span of days like any poor man, or any exiled citizen, dreaming of misery and persecution, attended by the sense of his own royalty. At other times he would desire a still stricter solitude ; he would forbid access to any human being, and, clad in the robes of a monk, would shut himself up in the vaulted chapel ; there he would meditate on the life of Charles V., and, imagining his seclusion to be in the St. Yuste monastery, would sing the Death Mass to himself, according to the precedent established by the former Spanish Emperor. But in the midst of these chants and meditations, his weak spirit was pursued and distracted by images of another kind. Never had the world and life itself appeared more beautiful to him than in this present solitude, so near to death. Between his eyes and the pages he would force himself to read,

brilliant processions would pass, armies triumphant, and people in transports of enthusiasm ; he would behold himself all-powerful, fighting, conquering and adored ; should a ray of sunshine fall athwart him through the stained-glass window, he would suddenly rise from the altar, impelled by a longing for light and air, far away from these dark and stiling places ; but he had only to return to the outer world to be again seized with the old disgust and weariness, for the first men he encountered would remind him by their distant ceremony of the great gulf fixed between them. He would yearn for friendship, and instal a favourite at his side ; and no sooner had he done so than his whole soul would be filled with apprehension ; he feared lest the strength of his attachment should turn him from divine worship, or, more often still, lest he should incur the reproach of withdrawal from affairs of state ; the object of his affections would then appear to him in the light of some despotic being, turning him from the path of duty ; he would forge imaginary chains for himself and compassionate his own oppression ; while, to the great misfortune of his friends, he had not got the strength to manifest his displeasure against them in rage which would have served them as their warning ; but would continue his caresses, thereby feeding the secret fire within his heart, and pushing it to the extremes of hatred. Indeed, there were moments when he was capable of doing anything against them.

Cinq-Mars was perfectly aware of the weakness of this man, his incapacity to continue in any path for long, and his feebleness of heart, preventing him from feeling either hate or love in its entirety. The position of himself as a favourite, envied by the whole of France, and an object of jealousy on the part of the great Minister himself, was so uncertain and so painful, that nothing but his love for Marie prevented him from breaking his golden chain with greater joy than that experienced by a convict sawing through the last link of his fetters with the file he has been concealing during two years of

captivity. His impatience to go through with the fate he now saw bearing down upon him hastened the explosion of this mine, laid with so much patience, as he himself admitted to his friend. His position was that of a man who, standing at the side of the book of life, each day beholds the finger that traces his own damnation or his safety. He departed with Louis XIII. for Chambord, resolved to chose the first occasion favourable to his project. The opportunity occurred.

The morning of the day fixed for the hunt, the King sent to inform him that he would await him at the "Escalier du Lis." But first we must try and describe this amazing erection.

Four leagues from Blois and one hour's distance from the Loire, bounded by muddy swamps on one side, and a wood of mighty oaks on the other, a royal château suddenly breaks into view, or rather, a fairy castle. Some genie with his magic lamp might well have transported it from the East during the thousand and one nights, removing it from the land of sunshine, and enclosing it in mists to conceal the *amours* of some mighty prince. This palace lies hidden like a precious treasure, but once seen, its blue domes and elegant minarets, its long terraces commanding woody stretches, its slender steeples open to the winds of heaven, and the intricate groining of its numerous colonnades, carry the spectator straight to Bagdad or Cashmir, or would do so, were it not for the blackened walls, tapestried with moss and ivy, and the pale and melancholy skies above, of a country used to rain. And, indeed, the building was the work of a man of genius, but he hailed from Italy, and was known as Primatice ; and its owner was a handsome Prince of many a secret love ; but he was a King upon a throne, and his name was Francis the First. The flames of his salamander* were visible from every point ; there it shone on the vaulted archways, radiating forth its multitudinous tongues of flame like so many stars in heaven ; each column was

*The royal emblem of that monarch.

supported by its burning crown ; its fires illuminated the stained-glass windows ; it writhed its way up the secret staircases, and with the gleam of its looks bade fair to devour the triple crescent of a mysterious Diana—Diana of Poitiers herself, twice crowned and adorned in this voluptuous retreat.

But the strangest feature of this strange building lies in its double staircase, rising on two spirals intertwined from the base to the highest point of its steeples, and culminating in a lantern containing a tiny room, crowned with an enormous *fleur-de-lis* visible for miles around. Two men could mount this stairway and not see one another. Such was the delicacy of its execution, the very stone itself would seem to have been moulded by the architect according to his heart's desire. It is hardly possible to imagine it in terms of plans needing to be explained to workmen ; there it stands, the semblance of a passing thought or fugitive conception, petrified by a sudden impulse into stone. A dream come true.

Slowly Cinq-Mars mounted the broad stairs which should lead him to his sovereign, and at every step he paused. Was it from disgust at once again drawing near a monarch to whose complaints he was obliged to listen day by day ? Or was he meditating his next move ? Whatever it was, the familiar sound of a guitar now floated into his hearing, and he recognised Louis's favourite instrument, accompanied by his feeble trembling voice ; apparently he was trying over one of his own compositions, with halting repetitions of its weak refrain. The words were hard to distinguish, and he could only make out one or two, such as " abandon," " the world's enemy," and " beauteous flame."

The young favourite shrugged his shoulders as he thought :

" What new sorrow has him now in thrall ? Once again I suppose I must try and probe this frozen soul that longs, and knows not what it longs for." And he entered the little room.

The Prince was half reclining on a long chair, clad all in black, his elbows leaning on the cushions, while he languidly touched the strings of his guitar. He paused and looked at his young friend reproachfully, then spoke to him in a querulous voice, stressing his words with emphasis :

"What is this I hear, Cinq-Mars ?" said he. "What conduct is this that they bring before my notice ? How grievously you hurt me in ignoring all my precepts ! You have involved yourself in a most disgraceful intrigue. Is it from you of all men that I should expect such things ? A man who won my friendship through his own worth and virtue !"

Filled with the thought of his own political projects, Cinq-Mars believed himself discovered, and for a moment his heart sank within him ; but it was with the utmost self-control that he replied :

"Yes, Sire, and I came hither to tell you everything. I am not in the habit of keeping back my thoughts from you."

"To tell me ?" exclaimed Louis XIII., flushing and paling alternately, like a man sick of a fever. "You would dare to soil my ears with such flagrant confessions ? And the calm way in which you mention such a thing ! You deserve to be sent to prison for the rest of your life ! This lack of confidence towards myself amounts to high treason on your part ! I would rather see you uttering false coin, like the Marquis de Coucy, or at the head of my rascally rebel-peasants, than hear what you have done ! You are a disgrace to your family and your father's name."

Cinq-Mars, believing himself ruined, put the best face he could on it, and replied resignedly :

"Very good, Sire, send me to my trial and then to the block ; but spare me your reproaches."

"And so you are pleased to laugh at me, you little country hobble-de-hoy ?" said Louis. "I am perfectly aware that you have done nothing to incur the penalty of death in the eyes of men, but it is before the

tribunal of God, monsieur, that you will finally be judged."

"*Ma foi*, Sire," replied the impetuous youth, goaded beyond endurance, "why will you not allow me to return to that country life of mine you are pleased to make a mock of? I have been tempted to do it already a thousand times, and now I shall. I can no longer endure the life I lead with you. An angel could not put up with it. Once again, let me be judged if I am guilty, and if not, let me retire into Touraine. It is you who have ruined me in attaching me to your person; if you have caused me to cherish hopes beyond my station, only to be dashed down immediately by you, is that my fault? And why did you make me your Master of the Horse if it was all to end there? Once for all, am I your friend or not? If I am, should I not be Duke, or Peer, or even Constable, as much as M. de Luynes, who gained your affections as an excellent trainer of falcons? Why am I not admitted to your councils? I should speak at least as well as all these old be-ruffled men; I have new ideas, and my arm is younger to strike a blow in your service. It is the Cardinal who has prevented you from including me, and I detest him for this very reason, that he alienates you from me! And if necessary I will kill him with my own hand!"

D'Effiat's eyes were sparkling with rage. His fists were clenched, and he now stamped with his foot and turned his back upon the King like a sulky child, leaning against one of the slender pillars of the lantern.

Louis, always terrified at resolution in any form, and with a continued horror of anything irreparable, took him by the hand. Alas for the weakness of power and for all human caprice! Thus was a young man allowed through childish outbursts of temper to govern a monarch of the first political importance in Europe! The King believed, and with a certain amount of reason, that any character carried away in this manner must be sincere, and this exhibition of temper therefore

failed to arouse his anger. Moreover, it was easy to forgive him for hating the Cardinal; the idea of his favourite's jealousy towards the Minister was rather pleasing to him than otherwise, since it implied devotion to himself, and there was nothing he really feared so much as indifference. Cinq Mars knew this, and had staked his salvation thereon, encouraging the King to consider everything he had done in the light of a boyish escapade, and the consequence of his love for himself. But the danger was not as great as he supposed, and he breathed again when the King said to him :

"It is not a question of the Cardinal, whom I love no better than you do. It is your own scandalous conduct that I have to reproach you with, and that I find it so hard to forgive. To think of it ! When I hear that, instead of devoting yourself to those habits of piety which I have helped to form in you—the whole time I am thinking of you as attending the *Angelus*, you have in reality left Saint Germain and gone to spend a portion of the night—with whom ? It is a sin for me even to mention such a name. With a woman of no reputation, whose relationship with you must be of the worst possible kind for the safety of your soul, and who receives advanced thinkers at her very house ! In short, Marion Delorme ! What have you to say in reply ? Answer me."

Leaving his hand within that of the King, and still leaning against the pillar, Cinq Mars replied :

"Is it so reprehensible to leave serious occupations for those more serious still ? If I visit Marion Delorme, it is to hear the talk of the great men who visit there. Nothing could be more innocent than these meetings ; certainly they give readings at her house which are often prolonged into the night, but far from corrupting the soul, they are a source of immense edification. Besides, you have never ordered me to account to you for my every deed ; I would have done so long ago had it been your wish."

"Ah, Cinq-Mars—Cinq-Mars ! Is there no such

thing as trust ? Do you not feel the need for it within yourself ? It is the first condition of a perfect friendship, such as ours should be, and such as my heart longs for so deeply."

An affectionate note crept into Louis's voice, and Cinq-Mars, observing him over his shoulder, adopted a less irritated air, merely appearing bored at having to listen to such things.

"How many times you have deceived me," continued the King. "Can I really trust myself to you ? Do you not really go to this woman's house to meet a very different kind of people ? Women, for instance ?"

"In God's name, Sire, no ! I go there often with a friend of mine from Touraine, a gentleman named René Descartes."

"Descartes ? I know that name. He is an officer who distinguished himself at the siege of la Rochelle, and has since taken to writing. He is reputed a good man, but has since formed a friendship with Des Barreaux, who is a most daring thinker. I am quite sure you find people there who are not at all good company for you ; many people of no breeding whatsoever. Tell me whom you saw there on your last visit."

"I am afraid I scarcely remember their names," said Cinq-Mars, with an air of the utmost abstraction. "First of all there was a Monsieur Groot there, or Grotius, from Holland."

"I know. One of Bernevelde's friends. He gets a pension from me. I liked him considerably, but the Car . . . but I was informed that he was inclined to Protestantism "

"I also saw there an Englishman named John Milton, a youth on his way back from Italy to London ; but he scarcely spoke at all "

"The name is strange to me I have never heard of him, but I am sure he must be a Protestant. And what Frenchmen did you meet ?"

"The young man who wrote *Cinna*, and who has been refused three times by the *Academie eminente*.

He was very annoyed at Du Ryer being elected in his place. His name is Corneille ”

“ Well,” replied the King, folding his arms and regarding him with a mingled air of triumph and reproach, “ let me ask you now what sort of people are these ? Is this the sort of circle in which you should be moving ? ”

Cinq-Mars winced somewhat at this observation, which wounded his self-conceit, and drawing near to the King he said :

“ You are perfectly right, Sire ; but an hour or two spent in stimulating conversation does no harm to anybody. Besides, men of the Court are also to be met with there, such as the Duc de Bouillon, the Cardinal de la Valette, Messieurs Montrésor, and Fontrailles, and illustrious men of science, including Mairet, Colletet, Desmaret, author of *Ariane* ; Charpentier, who wrote the beautiful *Cryopedie* ; Giry, Bessons and Baro, all of them Academicians ”

“ Indeed ? I am glad to hear it. Those are all names of real merit,” answered Louis. “ There is nothing to be said against them. They are men of established reputation and weight. Let us come to an understanding then, my dear boy. I will allow you to go there now and again, but do not deceive me any longer. You see I know all there is to know already. Here is something for you to look at.”

Whereupon the King, going to an iron safe placed against the wall, drew out enormous bundles of paper covered with the finest writing. On one was written *Baradas*, on another *d'Hautefort*, and on another still, *Cinq-Mars*. This one he held in his hand, and continued :

“ See now, how many times you have deceived me already ! Here is a list of faults committed by you during the two years I have known you ; each day I have written down all our conversations. Sit down.”

Cinq-Mars sat down with a sigh, and summoned up sufficient patience to listen for two whole hours to a

summary of the work which had occupied his master for two whole years. Several times during the reading he placed his hand before his mouth, and we should certainly do no less ourselves, should we have to relate these interminable dialogues, all of which were found in perfect order at the King's death, together with his will. We will content ourselves with his conclusion :

" And lastly, here are your faults of the seventh of December, three days ago. I was speaking to you of the flight of the merlin, and your lack of knowledge of the science of venery, and I quoted to you from the 'Royal Hunt,' a work written by King Charles IX. himself ; and this is what you said, and moreover, with considerable temper—'On my faith, Sire, give me regiments to lead in place of birds and dogs. I am convinced we should be the subject of public ridicule could they but know the way in which we pass our time here.' And on the eighth—yes, I see it was the eighth—while we were singing vespers together in my room, you cast your book into the fire-place in a rage, which in itself was an act of blasphemy, after which you told me you had let it fall by accident ; that was a mortal sin. See, I have underlined it here, *a lie* ! You cannot deceive me. I have told you before——"

" But, Sire——"

" Wait one moment. That evening you spoke of the Cardinal, and how he had caused a man to be burned unjustly out of personal hatred."

" And I repeat it and maintain it, and can prove it, Sire. It is the most atrocious crime on the part of this man whom you hesitate to disgrace, and who is destroying your happiness. I saw and heard everything myself at Loudon ; Urbain Grandier was not judged ; he was murdered. Come, Sire, since you have these memoirs in your hand, read out the proofs I gave you then."

Louis searched for the page in question, and having found it read it through attentively, and then cried :

" The horror of it ! How could I ever forget such a

thing! There is no doubt I am fascinated by this man. You are my real friend, Cinq-Mars. The horror of that crime! My reign will be stained with it! He actually prevented all the letters of the nobles and the lawyers of the neighbourhood from reaching me! Burnt alive! Without a proof! Out of vengeance! And a subject, nay, a whole people, calling upon my name in vain! Ah! Miserable indeed is the whole race of Kings!" And the monarch threw down his papers and wept.

"Ah, Sire, I love you for those tears," cried out Cinq-Mars, in real admiration. "Would that all France could see them! They would scarcely believe their eyes."

"Say you so? Then France does not know me."

"Indeed, no, Sire," replied d'Effiat, frankly. "Nobody knows you. I myself have accused you often of coldness and general indifference towards your people."

"Coldness! When I am dying of grief! Coldness! When I have foregone everything in their interests! Ungrateful land! When I have sacrificed everything, even my pride and the happiness of my own personal reign, from the fear I had of my own feeble life, and given my sceptre to be carried by a man whom I hate, believing his hand to be stronger than mine; bearing the harm he did me, in the hope that my people would benefit; swallowing my own tears that theirs might be dried—and I see now that my sacrifice was greater even than I had thought it, for it has not been recognised; they believed me incompetent, because I was timid and devoid of character, and doubted my own strength. Nevertheless, God sees me, and He knows all."

"Ah, Sire, would you but show yourself to France as you really are! Take up your power again! See what the love of France will do, rather than her fear! Come back to life again and mount your own throne!"

"No, no, my life is drawing to an end, dear boy. I am no longer fit for the strain of absolute monarchy."

" Ah, Sire, it is only your thinking makes it so ! It is time that power should no longer be bound up with wickedness. Would you but lift your voice and cry to all men that the reign of virtue is about to start on earth with your reign, and from that moment those enemies whom vice cannot confound will wither away at a word spoken from your heart. It yet remains to be seen what effect the good faith of a King of France can have amongst his people—that people always so eager for all that is beautiful and so prone to loyalty. The King, your father, ruled over us with a smile ; think what one of your tears might do ! It but remains for you to speak."

During this speech, the King, taken by surprise, flushed frequently, coughing and showing signs of the utmost embarrassment, as was his way whenever faced with anything approaching a decision. He frowned and placed his hand upon his heart, as though in pain, and therefore unable to form a reply, but Cinq-Mars, either carried away by his own eloquence, or from a determination to stake all on this last throw, continued imperturbably, with a solemnity which was not without its effect upon Louis. Finally, as a last resort, the King replied :

" But, Cinq-Mars, how is a minister to be got rid of who, for the last eighteen years, has surrounded me entirely by men of his own making ? "

" He is not as powerful as all that," answered the Squire-in-Chief, " and you have only to lift a finger for his friends to prove his worst enemies of all. The old League of the " Princes of the Peace " still exists, Sire, and nothing but the respect due to Your Majesty's choice has prevented it from bursting forth again."

" Ah, in God's name ! You can tell them that they need not stop for me ! I shall do nothing to prevent them ; no-one can accuse me of being a Cardinalist. If my brother can find some means of replacing Richelieu, nobody would be more pleased than I should."

" I believe, Sire, that he is going to speak to you to-day

of Monsieur le Duc de Bouillon. All the Royalists favour him."

"I do not by any means hate him," replied the King, arranging the pillows behind his back; "not by any means, although he is a little inclined to make trouble. We are related. Did you know that? Seven Princesses of the blood royal have married into his family, and he has had eight female relatives married to Princes of the blood—one of them to a King. Oh no, I have no reason to hate him. I never said that. Never."

"Then, Sire," cried Cinq-Mars confidently, "he and Monsieur will explain to you during the hunt how all things are ready, and who can be put in the place of the Cardinal's men, and which officers of the army can be relied on for their support against Fabert, and all the Cardinalists at Perpignan. You will find that the Cardinal has very few adherents. The Queen, Monsieur, the Nobles and the Parliament are all on our side; and the matter is accomplished, so soon as we have Your Majesty's consent. It is proposed to cause Richelieu to disappear in the manner of Marshal d'Ancre, who deserved it less than he does."

"Like Concini!" exclaimed the King. "Oh no . . . that must not be . . . I would never agree to. . . He is priest and Cardinal, and we should be excommunicated. But if any other means can be found, I should be in favour of it. You can consult your friends about it, and I will think it over too."

Once having spoken in this way, Louis now abandoned himself to his desire for vengeance, as though it were on the point of being satisfied, and the blow already struck. Cinq-Mars was perturbed at this, fearing that his wrath would spend itself in this manner, and last but a short time. Nevertheless, he relied on his final words, more especially when Louis, having exhausted his interminable complaints, added:

"Would you believe it? During the past two years that I have been mourning the loss of my mother, ever since the day when he played me that cruel trick before

all my Court, soliciting her recall, when all the time he was aware of her death—ever since that day I have been unable to get his consent to her burial in France with the remains of my ancestors. Even in her death she must needs be exiled.”

At this moment Cinq-Mars fancied he heard a step on the stairs. The King flushed slightly.

“Go now,” he said; “go quickly, and make ready for the hunt. You will ride close to my coach. Go quickly. I wish it.”

And he himself pushed Cinq-Mars towards the staircase and the door by which he had entered.

The favourite departed. But his master's anxiety had by no means escaped him. He was slowly descending, trying to discover the cause within himself, when he thought he heard a tread mounting the steps of the opposite staircase. He stopped. So did the noise. He went on again, and immediately seemed to hear it once more. He knew the stairway to be so constructed as to obscure all vision, and resolved to continue on his way, being both impatient and far from easy in his mind. He would have liked to wait at the entrance door to watch, but no sooner had he passed through the tapestry hanging which led to the great hall, than he was surrounded by a crowd of expectant courtiers, and was obliged to submit himself to their respects, their confidences, their solicitations, presentations, recommendations, their embraces, and the whole overwhelming flood of relationships to which a favourite is subjected and compelled to attend to with the utmost care, lest a slip should entail unutterable misfortunes. And so this trivial episode was wiped out of his mind, while he delivered himself to the sweets of adulation, finally mounting his horse in the great court-yard, followed by high-born pages, and surrounded by the most brilliant gentlemen of the Court.

And now Monsieur arrived, attended by his followers, and an hour later the King himself appeared, drooping and pale, and supported by four attendants. Cinq-Mars,

dismounting, helped him to enter his little low-built coach, harnessed to the gentlest of steeds, which Louis drove himself. Huntsmen walked on either side of the windows, with hounds in leash. At the sound of the horn, hundreds of young men leapt on their horses, and all rode off in the direction of the chase. Their destination, at the King's own wish, was a certain farm known as *l'Ormage*, and all the Court, according to custom, spread through the pathways in the park, leaving the King to pursue his way through an isolated lane, driving slowly, with the Squire-in-Chief riding at his side, and four other courtiers whom he had summoned to his side.

The aspect of this party of pleasure was sufficiently gloomy; the large oak trees were shedding all their leaves at the approach of winter, and their black branches were silhouetted against the grey sky like so many funeral candelabras. A thin mist gave promises of rain to come, while along the spaces seen through the melancholy boughs rolled the heavy carriages of the Court, filled with women all in black,* compelled to await the result of a hunt they did not take part in. The pack could be heard giving tongue in the distance, punctuated by the faint sounds of the horn, almost like a sigh. The wind was chilly and biting, and several of the ladies wore veils or black velvet masks, to protect their faces from the cold air which crept through the curtains of their coaches—for in those days they had no glass windows—and gave them the appearance of being dressed in what we now know as “domino costume.”

Thus all things were melancholy and sad, except for a certain number of young folk, excited by the hunt, galloping down pathways to the accompaniment of shouts and horn blowing, after which all was silent again, much as the sky takes on a gloomier hue when the show of fireworks is over.

In a pathway parallel to that pursued by the King, several courtiers, enveloped in large cloaks, had gathered

* According to an edict of 1639, proclaiming that all Court dresses should be black and simply cut.

together. They seemed to take but little notice of the actual hunt, and rode at the level of the King's coach, which they never allowed to disappear from sight, while speaking softly among themselves.

"All is well, Fontrailles . . . it is victory, I tell you ! See—the King keeps on taking him by the arm. See how he is smiling at him ! Watch M. le Grand ! See him getting down from his horse and sitting down in the coach by His Majesty ! Aha ! Now the old dog's death knell has sounded !"

"Ah ! It looks very much like it ! See how constantly he takes him by the hand ! He is signing to you, Montrésor ! Gondi ! You watch."

"By my faith, that is easily enough said, but I have no eyes of my own to watch with—only yours and the faith ! What is it they are doing now ? Curse my short-sightedness ! Tell me—what are they doing ?"

Montrésor continued :

"The King is bending over to the Duc de Bouillon and whispering in his ear ! He talks—and talks—and gesticulates without ceasing. Oh ! He will appoint him as minister."

"Yes, he will be minister," said Fontrailles.

"He will be minister," repeated the Comte de Lude.

"No doubt of it," confirmed Montrésor.

"I only hope he will give me a regiment all to myself, and then I can marry my pretty little cousin," cried young Olivier d'Entraigues, like the boyish page he really was.

Whereon Abbé Gondi laughed, and cast his eyes to heaven as he hummed a hunting song, after which he remarked :

"It is my belief, gentlemen, that you see further ahead into trouble than I do, or else that miracles are about to happen in the year of grace, 1642, for M. le Duc de Bouillon is no nearer to being made minister than I am, when the King embraces him. He is too much all of one piece. Whereas I——"

But Montrésor and the rest were too busy observing

the King's gestures to reply. They continued exclaiming :

" There is M. le Grand taking the reins out of his hands and driving ! "

The Abbé began to hum again :

" If you must drive my coach,
Good postilion, do not throw me out,
Ton ton, ton ton, ton taine, ton ton."

" My dear Abbé, you and your songs are driving me mad," exclaimed Fontrailles. " I believe you keep a song for every circumstance in life."

" I could provide you with plenty of events which would go excellently well to music," was Gondi's reply.

" Personally, I rather like that tune of yours," said Fontrailles ; adding, in a softer voice, " I do not think Monsieur will feel impelled to send me over to Madrid with that devil's treaty of his, and I shall not be sorry for it. It is a nasty business for anyone. The Pyrenees are not so easily crossed as he thinks, and the Cardinal is sure to be on our tracks."

" Aha ! " cried Montrésor.

" Aha ! " cried Olivier.

" And why this ' aha ? ' " demanded Gondi. " What wonderful discovery have you made now ? "

" Why, simply that the King has taken Monsieur by the hand ! Now God be praised, gentlemen ! We have beaten the Cardinal from this moment, and the old boar will be forced to turn at bay. Who will undertake to polish him off ? He had best be thrown into the sea."

" Too good for him," said Olivier. " He deserves to be tried."

" Certainly he does," said the Abbé. " I should say so indeed ! No lack of charges to bring against an insolent fellow who has dared to dismiss one of his own pages, eh ? "

Then, drawing in his horse, and allowing Olivier and Montrésor to pass him by, he accosted M. de Lude, who

was engaged with two more serious members of the party, and said :

“ In very truth, I am vastly tempted to let my manservant into the secret, for never have I seen a conspiracy more lightly entered into. Great enterprises like this demand secrecy and mystery, and ours would be the greatest of all, did we but treat it properly. I have never seen a more admirable faction in all history ; if we liked, we are in a position to set three kingdoms by the ears ; and everything is likely to be spoiled for lack of sense ! A vast pity ! I shall never cease to regret it. I have a natural bent for affairs of this sort, and this one is particularly dear to my heart, which has a weakness for grandeur. You cannot deny what I say ! Can you, d’Ambijoux ? Or Montmort ? ”

While this talk was going on, several large heavy coaches, drawn by four or six horses, were following the same path at a hundred paces distant from these gentlemen. The curtains on the right side were drawn, to obtain a view of the King. In the first coach was the Queen, seated alone at the back, wearing a black robe with a heavy veil. In front of her sat the Maréchale d’Effiat, and at her feet was the Princess Marie. She was seated on a little stool, her feet and the edge of her dress resting on the outer step, for, as we have already said, there were no windows. Marie was peering eagerly through the trees to watch the King’s gestures, though often drawing back in annoyance at the continual passing of the horses of the Prince Palatine and his suite.

This Prince from the North was dispatched by the King of Poland, ostensibly to negotiate important affairs, but in reality to prepare the Duchess of Mantua for her marriage with the old King Uladislas VI. During his visit at the French Court, he had made a point of exhibiting all the luxury of his own, which the Parisians were pleased to designate as “ Scythian ” and “ barbarous,” and, indeed, the strangeness of his Oriental costumes went far to justify these epithets.

The Palatine of Posmanie was a handsome man, with

a long thick beard—as had also all the members of his suite—his head shaved in the Turkish fashion, and covered with a fur cap; his tunic was short, and embroidered with diamonds and rubies, while his horse was painted red all over, and laden with plumes. He was attended by a company of Polish guards, clad in yellow and red, and wearing long-sleeved cloaks, hanging negligently from their shoulders. The Polish gentlemen who accompanied him were clothed in gold and silver brocade, and at the back of their shaven heads could be seen one single lock of hair, giving them the look of the Asiatic—a people as strange to the Court of Louis XIII. as were the Russians. The women regarded them as something savage and a little frightening.

Marie of Gonzaga was displeased at the perpetual salutations and Oriental marks of respect of this stranger and all his followers. Every time he passed in front of her he thought it necessary to utter some compliment in broken French, to which he would add a few stumbling words of hopeful allusion to his mission. She could think of no other means of ending the situation than putting her handkerchief to her mouth, and exclaiming to the Queen :

“ Truly, Madame, these gentlemen bring a curious odour with them which I find affects me in the strangest manner.”

“ Nevertheless, you must put a bold heart upon it, and get accustomed to them,” replied Anne of Austria, with a touch of severity. And then, as though unwilling to hurt her, she added gaily :

“ You will get used to it, just as we do. And you know that I am very easily affected in that way myself. Monsieur Mazarin was saying to me the other day, that my punishment in Hell would be perpetually to smell bad smells, and to have to sleep in holland sheets ! ”

But in spite of her bantering words the Queen was extremely grave, and soon fell silent. Leaning back in her coach, with her cloak wrapped round her, and apparently taking no interest in what was passing, she

abandoned herself to the swaying of the carriage as it jolted on its way. Marie, still keeping one eye on the King, spoke in a low voice to the Maréchale d'Effiat ; both of them were trying to give each other the confidence felt by neither, resulting in a mutual friendly deception.

" Let me congratulate you, Madame. M. le Grand is now seated at His Majesty's side ; things have never looked more propitious." Thus spoke Marie. And then for a long time she kept silence, while the carriage rolled sadly along its pathway of dried and withered leaves.

" Yes, I see it. It fills me with the greatest joy. How good the King is," replied the Maréchale. And she sighed deeply. Another long and melancholy silence ensued ; the two women looked at one another, and the eyes of both were filled with tears. Neither dared to speak, and Marie, looking downwards, beheld nothing but the damp brown earth beneath the carriage wheels. She was plunged in a sad reverie, and though beneath her very eyes was the spectacle of the first Court in Europe at the feet of the man she loved, everything combined to fill her with fear, and vague presentiments took possession of her mind.

All at once a horse galloped past her, quick as the wind. She raised her eyes just in time to catch a glimpse of Cinq-Mars's face. He took no notice of her ; his face was pale as death, and his eyes hidden underneath his frowning brows and the shadow of his enormous hat. She looked after him trembling, and saw him draw rein in the midst of the group of horsemen that preceded the carriage. They received him hat in hand. A moment afterwards he disappeared into a coppice with one of the group, and gazed at her from a distance, following her with his eyes till the carriage had passed by, after which it seemed to her that he handed a packet of papers to the man before disappearing into the wood. The falling mist prevented her from seeing any further. It was one of those mists so common in the Loire district. The sun would first appear in the shape of a minute moon, the

colour of blood, wrapped around with a ragged shroud, and half-an-hour later became enveloped in a veil so thick that Marie could scarcely make out the leading horses in the coach, while the men passing by her side seemed like so many grey spectres. The chilled fog now resolved itself into a penetrating rain, and the earth was infested with a smell of dampness. The Queen made the beautiful Princess sit by her side, and determined to drive back again. They returned at a slow pace through Chambord. The sound of the horn could now be heard collecting the stray pack together, while huntsmen passed quickly in front of the carriage, seeking their way in the mist, and crying out loudly to one another. For the most part Marie could make out nothing but some horse's head, or a dark human shape looming out of the fog in the forest, and she tried in vain to distinguish their words. But suddenly her heart beat quicker; they were calling the name of Cinq-Mars. "The King is asking for M. le Grand," was heard on all sides. "Where has the Master of the Horse got to?" A voice said as it passed by her side: "He seems to be lost," and these words, simple enough in themselves, made her shudder, for her overwrought mind gave them a sinister twist. And this thought followed her back to the château, and into her private apartment, where she quickly concealed herself. A little later she heard the arrival of the King and Monsieur, and a few moments afterwards some scattered shots within the forest. But it was impossible to see any firing, although she peered out of the narrow windows; everything outside seemed completely enveloped in a white blanket, and the light of day was no more visible.

Meanwhile, at the extreme end of the forest, in the direction of Montfauult, two horsemen had lost their way. Weary of seeking the road to the château through the endless monotony of trees and woodland paths, they had paused to rest a moment by the side of a pond, when suddenly eight to ten men sprang at them from out of the brushwood, hurled themselves upon them, and before they had the time to grasp their weapons, had

clung on to their legs, their arms, and the bridles of their steeds, in such a way as to render them powerless. Through the fog a raucous voice was heard to shout :

"Are you Royalists or Cardinalists? Shout out 'Long live M. le Grand,' or you are dead men!"

"Villainous rascals," replied the first of the riders, struggling to turn his pistol on to them, "I will have you all hanged for abusing my name like this!"

"*Dios el Senor!*" cried out the voice, and in the twinkling of an eye the men had let go their prisoners, and disappeared again into the coppice. A burst of wild laughter was now heard, and a solitary figure approached Cinq-Mars.

"*Amigo*, do you not know me? This is just a joke on the part of Jacques, the Spanish captain."

Fontrailles drew near, and said to the Squire-in-Chief in a low voice :

"Monsieur, this is an extremely enterprising man. Take my advice and use him in your employ. It never does to throw away a useful weapon."

"Listen to me," broke in Jacques de Laubardemont, "and let us get it over quickly. I am no phrase-monger like my father. I remember you have done me more than one good turn in the past, and latterly you have been useful to me again, without knowing it, for I have been able to mend my fortunes a little during your petty squabbles. If you desire it, I can do you an important service. I have several brave fellows at my command."

"What service?" asked Cinq-Mars. "Let us hear first."

"I will begin by giving you a piece of information. This morning, while you were going down the King's staircase on one side, Father Joseph was climbing up the other."

"Gracious Heavens! Then that explains his sudden change of behaviour! Can it be true? A King of France! And he allowed us to confide all our plans in him!"

"Well—there it is! Have you nothing to say to me?"

You must know I have an old grudge to work off against this Capucin monk."

"What is that to do with me?" And Cinq-Mars bowed his head, lost in thought.

"It has a great deal to do with you, considering that, if you only give me the word, I will rid you of him thirty-six hours from now, although at the moment he has very nearly reached Paris. And if you wish it, I will include the Cardinal too."

"Leave me in peace. I am in need of no assassins," replied Cinq-Mars.

"I understand your meaning," answered Jacques, "and you are probably right. You consider him a subject for honourable swords. No doubt he is. Rank has its privileges. It is vastly more fitting that the matter should be taken in hand by men of noble birth. The successful one may certainly live in hopes of possessing a marshal's staff. I have no pretensions that way. All the same, too much pride is a bad thing in any profession. I cannot aspire to deal with the Cardinal, since he is a part of the King himself!"

"Nor shall anybody else," said Cinq-Mars.

"But let me at least have the monk," replied Jacques with alacrity.

"If you refuse this offer you will do wrong," said Fontrailles; "you do not receive such chances every day. Vitry tried his hand against Concini and finished with a marshalship. There are plenty of eminent men who have killed their enemies with their own hands in the streets of Paris, and you hesitate to rid yourself of this particular scoundrel? Richelieu has his own hired bravoës, and you must have yours too. I cannot understand your scruples."

"Do not torment him," said Jacques abruptly; "I know how he feels; I used to think like that myself, as a child, before I learned to reason. I should have killed more than a monk in ridding you of——. But let me speak to him." And he turned towards Cinq-Mars and continued:

"Listen. When a conspiracy is formed, 'it is to achieve the death, or at least the fall, of some certain person, is it not?'" At this he paused. "That being the case, it means falling out with the good God, and being on friendly terms with the devil! Agreed? 'Secondly,' as they say in the Sorbonne, it is as good to be hanged for a sheep as a lamb. Understood? *Ergo*, it matters not whether one man is killed or a thousand. I defy you to reply to that."

"Impossible to put it better, oh doctor of logic," replied Fontrailles with a half laugh, "and I see you will make an excellent travelling companion. If you like, you shall escort me into Spain."

"I know perfectly well you are about to go there with the treaty," answered Jacques, "and I will lead you through the Pyrenees by paths unknown to men. All the same, I shall never cease to regret not having wrung the neck of that old he-goat before departing, instead of leaving him behind in our wake, like a knight in the middle of a game of chess. Once again, monsieur," he continued, turning to Cinq-Mars with an air of contrition, "if you have any religion in you, you cannot refuse my request. Remember the words of our fathers in theology, Hurtada de Mendoza and Sanchez, who have proved so ably that by secretly disposing of our enemies, we escape two sins—that of exposing one's own life, and that of duelling. And I have always acted in accordance with this great and consoling principle."

"Let me be, let me be," cried out Cinq-Mars in a voice choking with rage. "I have other things to think of."

"But what can be more important?" demanded Fontrailles. "This may be the very weight to turn the balance in our favour."

"I am seeking to learn the weight of a monarch's heart," replied Cinq-Mars.

"Now you terrify me," replied his companion. "We never meant to go as far as that."

"You distort my meaning, monsieur," said Cinq-Mars severely. "Kings bemoan their lot when a

subject betrays them, and it was of that I was thinking. And now for war! War! Civil war, or foreign war, now let your fires arise! I hold the match to fire the mine! Let the State perish and twenty kingdoms besides, if needs must be! The betrayal of a subject by his King shall end in still worse calamities! Listen to me."

And he drew Fontrailles a few steps away. "My instructions to you were to prepare for our retreat and assistance should the King withdraw his support. But I had a sudden presentiment, through his strained attempts at friendliness, and decided to let you start at once, more especially as he concluded by telling me of his departure for Perpignan. I fear Narbonne. I foresee that he will go there and deliver himself up to the Cardinal. Therefore you must start immediately. I have given you the letters already, and now here is the treaty; it is under fictitious names, but here is the letter to go with it, signed by Monsieur, the Duc de Bouillon and myself. That is all that is required by the Comte-duc d'Olivares. Go now, and within a month I shall expect you at Perpignan, and be ready to admit seventeen thousand Spaniards from Flanders into Sedan." Then, turning to the adventurer close by, he continued: "As for you, my fine fellow, since you are so eager for recognition, I depute you to escort this gentleman as far as Madrid; you will be well rewarded for your pains."

Thereupon Jacques twirled his moustache and replied:

"Then you really are not ashamed to employ me in your service? So much the better for you! Let me tell you that Christine of Sweden herself sent to ask for me, and desired to have me at her side as confidential adviser! And she was brought up at the cannon's mouth, by her father, Gustavus Adolphus. She knows what it is to love the smell of powder and the sight of brave men; but I did not wish to enter into her service, she being a Huguenot, and I having certain religious scruples which I cannot throw off. And I swear to you

here, by Saint Jacques, to see monsieur safely through the Pyrenees as far as Oloron, as safe as in these woods, and to defend him against the devil himself if need be, and your papers too, that we will bring back to you without a mark or scratch. As for reward, I do not require any. My reward always lies in the action itself. Besides, I am not in the habit of taking money, being a man of good family. The Laubardemonts are an old race and a good one."

"Then good-bye, most noble aristocrat," replied Cinq-Mars, "and be off with you."

He wrung Fontrailles by the hand and disappeared, with a sigh, into the heart of the wood, on his way to the castle of Chambord. •

CHAPTER VII

THE READING

SHORTLY after these events, a number of carriages might have been seen one evening in front of an attractive little house close to the Place Royale. Three steps led up to a small door which was constantly opened to receive the guests. Dwellers in the neighbouring houses would meanwhile put their heads out of the window to complain of their slumbers being disturbed at this hour of the night, and the watchmen would gather together to do their duty, only to disappear mysteriously on beholding the various coaches attended by ten or twelve servants a-piece, all armed with sticks and carrying lighted torches. A young gentleman, with three men in attendance, now entered, demanding Mademoiselle de Lorme. His long sword was decorated with rose-coloured ribbons, and enormous knots of the same hue adorned his pointed slippers to such an extent that his feet were almost entirely hidden from sight. He frequently twisted his curly little moustache and combed his pointed beard assiduously before entering the reception room. His entry was the signal for general acclamations :

“ Here he is at last,” a young clear voice was heard to cry. “ He has learnt the secret of keeping us waiting. Have you not, my dear Desbarreaux? Come quickly, take a seat, and begin to read this minute.”

The speaker was a young woman of about twenty-four, tall and beautiful, despite her dark, almost woolly, hair, and olive-hued complexion. There was something boyish about her attitude, probably derived from the circle of her friends, which seemed to consist entirely of the male sex, and which she would seize brusquely by the arm, talking with a freedom which infected them all. There was frequent laughter wherever she stood, more the result of her native wit than natural gaiety of disposition, for her face was full of hidden passion, and seldom seemed to smile, and her great blue eyes, beneath her jet-black hair, added to the strangeness of her appearance.

Desbarreaux kissed her hand with an air of the utmost courtesy, and, still talking, the two promenaded round the room together, where guests were assembled to the number of about thirty ; some seated in large arm-chairs, others standing near the arch of the tremendous fireplace, others again chatting within the deep window seats, hung with enormous tapestries. Some of these were obscure and unknown men, now known to all posterity ; others illustrious in their time, but now sunk into oblivion. Among the latter, the new-comer warmly greeted Mm. d'Aubijoux, de Brion, de Montmort and other shining lights, who were there in the capacity of judges, while he also shook by the hand Mm. de Monteuvel, de Sirmond, de Malleville, Baro, and other literary men, nearly all represented as great men in the annals of the Academy, whose founders they were. But M. Desbarreaux had scarcely a nod of protection to bestow upon young Corneille, talking in a corner with a foreigner, and a youth whom he presented to the mistress of the house as Poquelin, son of the King's upholsterer. This was Molière, while the other was Milton.

Before the reading took place, which this young literary

epicure had come to deliver, a great discussion arose between him and other poets or prose writers present. It was conducted rapidly among themselves, with much interchange of epigram, and in a literary jargon quite incomprehensible to any ordinary citizen, should he have chanced to stray within their midst, and it concluded with many demonstrative handshakes, and innumerable allusions to each and all of their various works.

"Aha, there you are, my dear Baro!" cried the new arrival; "I have just been reading your last sextet. Ah, but what a piece of work! The very acme of gallantry and tenderness!"

"And what do you know about the Tender Passion?" broke in Marion de Lorme. "Have you ever been in that country in your life? I think you have been as far as the village of Lively Wit, and perhaps put up at the hostelry of 'Pretty Verses,' but further you have never ventured. If Monsieur, the Governor of Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde will only be good enough to show us his new map, I will show you exactly where you are."

Scudery arose with a bombastic and pedantic air, and, unrolling on to the table a sort of chart, adorned with blue ribbons, pointed out the lines in rose coloured ink, traced with his own hand.

"Here is the most beautiful portion of the *Clélie*," said he. "I believe this map is usually regarded as the height of gallantry, but it is really nothing more than a simple pleasure of the mind, created for the delectation of our little literary community. However, as I know it takes all sorts of people to make a world, there are probably one or two curious beings without the particular turn of wit necessary to appreciate my map. I will explain. This is the road that must be followed, to go from Recent Friendship to the land of Tender Passion, step by step, gentlemen, as you will observe, leading up from the Tenderness of Inclination, the Tenderness of Esteem, and the Tenderness of Gratitude. And first of all it will be necessary to inhabit the hamlets of Great-

Heart, Generosity, Exactitude, Slight Attentions, Letters of Gallantry, and Letters of Love ! ”

“ Oh, but it is ingenious to the last degree,” cried out Vaugelas, Colletet, and all the rest.

“ Observe, moreover,” remarked the gratified author, “ that the direction must include Complaisancy and Sensibility, and that if this route is not followed exactly, the risk is run of getting lost in Lukewarmness and Forgetfulness, and finally falling into the Lake of Indifference.”

“ Delicious ! Delicious ! A gallant in very truth ! ” cried the delighted auditors. “ Nothing more remains to be said.”

“ Very good, madame,” continued Scudery ; “ and now let me tell you a secret. This work, printed under my name, was really done by my sister. It was she, you will remember, who made those incomparable translations of Sappho.” And, without waiting to be asked, he began to declaim in a loud tone :

“ A lover’s sorrows are sharp sweet pains,
Bringing death to the heart.
Remove the causes, and what remains ?
Nothing. Let life depart.”

“ And could that ancient Greek poetess really write as well as that ? I shall never believe it,” cried Marion de Lorme ; “ I am sure Mademoiselle de Scudery is infinitely superior ! The idea is entirely hers. Let her include it in *Clélie*, I implore, in these same charming verses. How well it will come into her Roman history.”

“ Indeed it will. A most perfect piece of work,” agreed all the celebrities. But then—Horace, Arunce and the charming Porsenna—could there be more perfect exponents of gallantry ? ”

They were all bending over the map of the Tender Passion, their fingers interlacing, as they followed the curves of the various Rivers of Love. Young Poquelin summoned up enough courage to murmur in his timid voice :

“ But what is it all for ? Does it really lead to happiness, or pleasure ? Monsieur does not look very happy to me, and I, for one, never felt less cheerful.”

But his only reply was contemptuous glances, and he took refuge in meditating on his “ *Precieuses Ridicules*.”

Desbarreaux now prepared to read a pious sonnet, which he confessed to have written during illness. He appeared extremely ashamed that his thoughts should have strayed for one instant towards his Maker, during a thunderstorm, and blushed accordingly. But the mistress of the house now interposed.

“ There is no time left for you to read us your beautiful verses, for we are expecting the arrival every minute of Monsieur the Squire-in-Chief, and other gentlemen, and it would be sacrilege to let a great writer like you read his work in such noise and disturbance. But here is a young foreigner in our midst to-night, on his way back to England from Italy. I understand he has written some poetry, though I do not know what. But he will read us a stanza or so. A good many gentlemen of this Eminent Society know English, and for the benefit of the rest, he has had the passage he is about to let us hear translated, by a former secretary of the Duke of Buckingham. You will find the French copies on that table.”

Whereupon she took some of them up and distributed them among her learned guests. Everyone sat down and silence prevailed. It was a little time before the young foreigner could be prevailed upon to speak, and leave his seat in the window, where he seemed getting on admirably with Corneille. He now came forward to the chair placed in front of the table. He seemed but weak in health, and almost sank into his seat while, with one hand he shaded his beautiful large eyes, that were inflamed either by tears or midnight watchings. He recited various fragments from memory, his suspicious hearers regarding him meanwhile with an air half haughty, half patronising, while some carelessly turned over the leaves of the translation.

His voice, somewhat inarticulate at the beginning,

gradually grew clear from his own mental excitement. Touched with the real inspiration of poetry, his face, raised Heavenwards, revealed all the sublimity of the Evangelist depicted by Raphael, burning with inward light. He dealt in verse with the Fall of Man, and evoked that Holy Spirit, whose habitation is found in none but pure and simple hearts, who knows all things that are, and assisted at the birth of Time.

This prologue was received in the most profound silence, and a faint murmur arose after the last words had been heard, unnoticed by the poet, already transported to another world than this—the world of his own creation.

He described the Infernal Spirit, bound with diamond chains to the fires of vengeance, and his fall, while nine times Time divided night from day, for mortals upon earth ; the “ darkness that can be seen ” of the eternal prisons, and the flaming ocean on which floated the fallen angels ; and now his voice thundered forth the speech of the King of Demons to Beelzebub :

“ If thou beest he ; but oh, how fallen ! how changed
From him, who in the happy realms of light,
Clothed with transcendent brightness, didst outshine
Myriads, though bright ! . . . What though the field be
lost ?

All is not lost ; the unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield,
And what else is not to be overcome ;
That glory never shall his wrath or might
Extort from me.”

At this moment a lackey announced in a loud voice the arrival of Mm. de Montrésor and d’Entraigues. Whereon ensued general salutations, conversation, re-arranging of chairs, and final settling down again. The audience took the opportunity of discussing the verses, and the general opinion seemed to be that they were conceived in the worst possible taste, a few “ brothers of the pen,”

sapped by routine, asserting that they could not understand it, that it was above their heads (speaking thereby truer than they knew), hoping, by this false humility, to draw some compliment upon themselves, and some scathe to the poet, thereby killing two birds with one stone. One or two voices were even heard to talk of blasphemy!

The interrupted poet sat with his head in his hands, as though not to hear this concerted attack on the part of critics and polite society. Three men only drew near to him: an officer, Poquelin and Corneille. The latter whispered in Milton's ear:

"If I were you I should start something different. You are soaring too high above your audience."

The officer shook the young English poet by the hand, and said: "I admire you from the bottom of my heart."

The English boy looked at him astonished, and saw before him a face full of spirituality, passion and suffering. He made him a grateful sign of acknowledgment, and tried to collect himself, in order to continue. The tones of his voice now sounded very soft and sweet, as he told of the happy days in the Garden of Eden, ending with the pathos and tragedy of the fall of mankind. The eyes of Marion de Lorme were filled with tears in spite of herself. Nature had for once triumphed over artificial wit, and poetry had aroused in her the grave religious thoughts hitherto stifled by the intoxication of ceaseless pleasure. The idea of virtuous love, in all its beauty of purity, was now for the first time revealed to her soul, and there she stood and listened, much like some pale and beautiful statue turned into stone by the touch of a magic ring.

Corneille, together with his young friend and the officer, were struck dumb with an admiration they dared not express, for shrill cries of protestation were now being raised against the astonished poet.

"But this is positively intolerable!" exclaimed Desbarreaux. "Really, its insipidity is enough to make one sick!"

“ So dreadfully remote from Love’s Bright Flame ! So utterly devoid of gallantry,” sighed Godeau, compiler of anthologies.

The company had risen, and continued to deliver itself of these gratifying remarks, though in such a manner as to make it impossible for the poet to overhear their words. He realised, however, that his reception had been none of the best, and paused before plucking a fresh string of his lyre.

At this moment de Thou was announced. He came silently into the room, and crept behind the author’s chair, joining Corneille, Poquelin and the young officer. Milton once again started to read.

He read of the coming into Eden of the Celestial Host, with a flutter of gigantic wings, scenting the air with strange odours ; he told them of the story of the heavens ; of the Arch Rebel, Lucifer, clad in glittering armour, and mounted on a chariot flaming as the sun, guarded by shimmering cherubim, rolling on to conflict with the Eternal God. Of how Emanuel appeared on the chariot of the Lord, his right hand bearing the thunder with which to drive the infernal army, with deafening noise, back to the regions of hell, broken and confounded beneath the ruined skies.

But at this point he was openly interrupted, for his words had by now offended not only their good taste, but their religious scruples. Exclamations were heard on all sides, and the hostess of the evening was obliged to rise and do her utmost to prevent their coming to the author’s ears. This was no difficult matter, for he was entirely absorbed in the grandeur of his own thoughts, and for the time being had lost all contact with the earth beneath him. When at last he opened his eyes to his surroundings, he found four admirers standing at his side, whose words rose above all the voices of his detractors.

Nevertheless, Corneille continued to repeat to him :
“ Believe me when I tell you that you will never achieve instant fame with a work so beautiful as that. Very few minds can appreciate pure poetry. For the

majority of men it has to be combined with the immediate and almost physical appeal of drama. I was once tempted myself with the idea of a religious poem, but soon realised such a thing to be impossible."

"What care I for the glory of a moment?" replied Milton. "My aim is not success. I sing because I am a poet, and I am led whither my inspiration takes me; it is the best and only guide. Even if my verses are not read for a hundred years after I am dead, they will none the less be mine."

"They will have my admiration long before they are even written," said the young officer. "At last I have found the God whose secret image has been ever in my heart."

"Who is it says such grateful words to me?" enquired the poet.

"I am René Descartes," replied the soldier quietly.

"Indeed, monsieur!" exclaimed de Thou. "Are you lucky enough to be related to the author of the *Principes*?"

"I am the author!" said he.

"You, monsieur. But—but—forgive me, but I thought—are you not in the army?" the young judge stuttered in amazement.

"Ah, monsieur! You wonder what a thinking man can have to do with a military uniform! Well, I certainly carry a sword, and I was present at the siege of La Rochelle. I must admit to an affection for soldiering, since it serves to sustain the soul at a level of noble ideas, through the constant contemplation of the idea of sacrifice. All the same, it should not occupy all a man's time, or all his thoughts either. A soldier is prone to rot in periods of peace; besides, he is always liable to foolish interruptions in the shape of a sudden and ridiculous accident. And then he dies in the midst of evolving his plan of the universe, and posterity conceives an altogether false idea of him. A most distressing business."

De Thou smiled with pleasure at hearing these simple

words from such a great man—the man who, as a thinker, was dearest of all to his heart. He shook the hand of this young philosopher from Touraine, and drew him into a neighbouring room, together with Corneille, Milton and Molière, where they entered into one of those conversations which make both the time which goes before and the time which follows after, seem flat, stale and unprofitable.

The discussion had lasted two hours when the sound of guitars and flutes, tuning up for the sarabandes, allemands and Spanish dances which the young Queen had brought into fashion, together with the sight of groups of young women passing by to the sound of merry laughter, denoted that the ball had begun. A young and very beautiful creature, holding a fan in her hand after the manner of a sceptre, and escorted by ten young gallants, sailed into their little retreat, followed by her miniature Court, which she directed like a veritable Queen. The studious party was at once compelled to capitulate.

"Farewell, gentlemen," said de Thou "I retire in favour of Mademoiselle de Lenclos and her musketeers."

"In sooth, gentlemen," said the youthful Ninon, "do we really alarm you so much? You look like so many conspirators!"

"It may be that name is better suited to us, for all our merry-making," cried young Olivier d'Entraigues, who led the lady by the hand.

"I fear I am the object of your conspiracy, Monsieur Page," replied Ninon, casting a look towards another cadet, and bestowing her spare hand upon yet a third, while all the other young bloods tried their hardest to place themselves within the danger zone of her glances, for she scattered her sparkling looks among them much as a flame, swiftly lighting up dead torches, one by one.

De Thou effected his escape without being noticed, and was descending the grand staircase, when who should he see coming up but the little Abbé Gondi, scarlet and

perspiring, who stopped him brusquely, with an air of the utmost excitement.

"Come, come, where are you off to? Let the scholars depart, if you will, but not you—you belong to us! I'm a little late, but our beautiful Aspasia will forgive me, I know. What are you going home for at this time? Is it all over?"

"It looks like it. They have finished reading, and begun to dance."

"Reading, I dare say—but what about the swearing-in?"

"What do you mean?" asked de Thou.

"Has M. le Grand not arrived yet?"

"I expected to see him here. But either he has not come, or else he has been and gone."

"No, no, come along with me," persisted the little rattlepate. "You are one of us—of course you are! It is absolutely necessary that you should be with us—come——"

De Thou, not liking to deny his friends, even in the matter of social gatherings, which he detested, followed the Abbé, who passed through two tiny rooms leading to an unfrequented staircase. This they descended, and at every step they took, the sound of men's voices could be heard more clearly. Gondi opened a door. A most astonishing sight met his eyes.

The room before them, lit by a mysterious half light, had all the appearance of a lovers' secret meeting place of the most voluptuous kind. On one side stood a gilded bed, with a dais of tapestry overhead, adorned with feathers, lace and the most elaborate ornaments. All the furniture, carved and gilded, was upholstered in grey silk, richly embroidered, while squares of velvet were placed at the foot of each arm-chair, on the thickest of carpets. Little mirrors, fastened to one another by silver ornaments, so as to give the effect of one entire mirror—a thing scarce in those days—threw their reflections into every corner of the room. Into this chamber of delight no sound from the outer world could

penetrate ; but the people gathered within it seemed a long way removed from the thoughts it should be expected to inspire. A group of men, all of them recognised by de Thou as distinguished members of the army or the Court, were gathered at the entrance, and overflowing into a neighbouring apartment which appeared rather larger. All of them were gazing attentively at what was going in the principal room. Ten young men stood close together, their bare swords in their hands, point to the ground. They were gathered around a table, and their faces were one and all turned in the direction of Cinq-Mars, to whom they were swearing their fidelity. The Master of the Horse was standing alone, in front of the fire-place, his arms folded, and apparently buried deep in thought. Next to him stood Marion de Lorme, grave and self-possessed. Evidently she had just finished presenting these young men to him.

No sooner had Cinq-Mars become aware of his friend, than he hurried to open the door, casting a furious look at Gondi, and seizing de Thou by both his arms, stopped his entrance at the last step.

"What are you doing in here ?" he asked in a low voice. "Who brought you here ? What do you want with me ? If you enter this room you are a ruined man."

"What are you doing here yourself ? What is going on in this house ?"

"The consequences of what you know already. Go, I tell you. The air here is poison for everyone who breathes it."

"It is too late, I have already been seen here. What would they say now if I were to go ? They would lose heart and believe you to be lost."

This dialogue was spoken hurriedly and in whispers. And now de Thou pushed back his friend, and entering the room with a firm step, walked over towards the fire-place.

Cinq-Mars deeply hurt, resumed his place again,

bowed his head, doing his utmost to control himself, and, looking up once more with a somewhat calmer face, continued the speech interrupted by his friend's arrival.

"Espouse our cause, since you will, gentlemen," he was saying, "but remember, there is no great need for mysteries. Bear in mind that when a strong mind once embraces a line of thought, that line must be followed to its uttermost conclusion. Your courage will be far more sternly tested now than by any Court intrigue. And thank me at least for one thing. In return for a conspiracy, I give you a war! M. de Bouillon has departed to put himself at the head of his army in Italy; two days from now I start for Perpignan to arrive there before the King. There you will all join me, and the Royalists in the army will await our arrival."

At this point he looked around him calmly and confidently at the enthusiastic expressions on the faces of his listeners. But before allowing himself to be overwhelmed by the flood of emotion peculiar to the beginnings of all great enterprises, he determined to test their allegiance still further, and continued in a graver tone:

"Yes, gentlemen, make no mistake. This will be war, and open war. La Rochelle and Navarre are preparing for a great Protestant revival; the Italian army will advance to our support on one side, while the King's brother will join us on the other; the man we seek will be surrounded, and completely crushed. Parliament itself will appear in our support, bearing their petition to the King—as strong a weapon as our arms should be—and after our victory, we will throw ourselves at the feet of our Sovereign master, and ask his forgiveness for having hastened his resolution and delivered him from this ambitious man of blood."

His words were rewarded by a growing assurance in the looks of those around.

"And now," he went on, folding his arms and controlling his own feelings by the strongest effort of will, "do you wish to draw back from a decision which will make you known to other men as rebels? Perhaps you

consider I have already abused the powers confided by you to me? I have carried things to extremity, but there are times when monarchs must be served in spite of themselves. As you know, all is arranged beforehand. Sedan will open its gates to us, and we are sure of Spain. Twelve thousand seasoned soldiers will go with us as far as Paris. But no town will be handed over to the foreigner; all will be garrisoned by French troops, and taken in the name of the King."

"Long live the King! Long live our Union! Our last new Union, our Holy League!" shouted all the young men.

"Then it has come!" cried Cinq-Mars, in all the glow of enthusiasm; "at last it has come! The most wonderful day of my life! Let the old men cease to despise our youth! They have been calling us frivolous and foolhardy long enough! Where are your reproaches now? Here we have conceived and brought to birth the biggest enterprise of modern times, and the most healthful to the State! And your leader is twenty-two! What is youth for, but to transform the world by new ideas? Let the old carry them out, if they will! But the young men must look into the future, and trace the lines that it shall follow! It is for them to lay the first stone, and spend themselves to carry out these projects of their own making! We need nothing but courage and a stout heart! It is not cleverness we want, but loyalty!"

These words evoked a fresh outburst of applause, and at this moment an old white-bearded man was seen making his way through the crowd.

"Now we're for it," muttered Gondi beneath his breath; "here comes the Chevalier de Guise to chill us all with his old man's chatter."

And truly, the aged nobleman, having shaken Cinq-Mars by the hand, and taken a position near to him, began slowly and laboriously:

"Indeed, my boy, and all you young people here present, I rejoice to think that my old friend Bassompierre will soon be rescued by your efforts, and that you

will avenge the Comte de Soissons and your Montmorency. But—but—it is the duty of youth, ardent as it is, to listen to those who are more experienced. I have seen something of the League, my dear boys, and let me tell you, you cannot take to yourselves the title of the ‘ Holy League,’ as it was then called, or the ‘ Guardians of St. Peter,’ or the ‘ Pillars of the Church,’ since you have declared yourselves willing to seek the assistance of the Huguenots ; neither can the device on that large green seal of yours be that of an empty throne, since the throne is already occupied by a ruler.”

“ Say rather by two,” interrupted Gondi with a laugh.

“ All the same, it is of the utmost importance,” continued the old man, speaking through the tumult of all these young folk ; “ it is of the utmost importance that you should have a name that will appeal to the public. That of ‘ War for the Public Good ’ has been taken already, and ‘ Princes of the Peace ’ was the last name we had. We must find another—— ”

“ What about ‘ The King’s War ? ’ ” cried Cinq-Mars.

“ You have hit it ! ‘ The King’s War ! ’ ” shouted out Gondi and all the rest.

“ Again,” continued this old member of the League, “ you will have to gain the consent of the Theological Faculty of the Sorbonne to approve of your title, and to corroborate our former proposition that it is permitted to the people to disobey their magistrates, and hang them if the occasion requires.”

“ My dear Chevalier,” cried out Gondi, “ there is no need for that whatever. Let M. le Grand go on speaking. We are no more concerned with the Sorbonne at this moment than with Saint Jacques Clement himself ! ”

Everyone laughed, and Cinq-Mars proceeded :

“ It was my wish, gentlemen, to hide nothing from you concerning the plans of Monsieur, of the Duc de Bouillon and myself, as it is only right that a man risking his life should be told the secrets of the game. But I have dwelt only on the gloomy side of the picture, and said not one word about the strength of our position,

simply because there is not one of you who does not know all there is to know. Mm. de Montrésor and Saint Thibal, do you want me to tell you of the wealth that Monsieur has put at our disposal? M. d'Aignan and M. de Mouy, are you in ignorance of the number of young men who have come forward to join themselves to your companies, and fight against the Cardinalists? Or how many have come from Touraine and Auvergne, the lands of the house of d'Effiat, responsible for two thousand noblemen with their adherents? Baron de Beauvau, need I mention before you the valour and zeal of the men you gave to the unhappy Comte de Soissons, whose cause was our own, and whom you saw struck down in the moment of his triumph? Need I inform you, gentlemen, of the joy that prevails in Spain over our preparations, of the letters from the Cardinal Infant to the Duc de Bouillon? In the presence of the Abbé Gondi, and M. d'Entraigues, and all of you, gentlemen, who know it but too well, need I describe the miseries and humiliations of this town of Paris? While all the countries in the world groan together for peace, which the Cardinal of Richelieu ever seeks to prevent through his own treachery, all orders of Society are crying out against this man's ambitious violence, directed, as it is, towards the throne, both temporal and spiritual, of this our land of France!"

Here Cinq-Mars was interrupted by a murmur of general assent. After which there was a moment's silence, in which could be heard the noise of the stringed instruments and the measured tread of the dancers. At this momentary distraction, several of the younger members began to laugh. Cinq-Mars seized the opportunity and addressed them again:

"Oh, pleasures of youth," he cried; "love, dancing and music, why need we now turn to thoughts of sterner stuff? Should pleasure not suffice to fill up our leisure hours? Consider the force of our wrongs, when we needs must make our voices heard through the glad laughter of festivity, and vow ourselves to death and warfare in the midst of gladness and rejoicing! Woe be to the man

that casts a cloud upon a people's youth ! When a young man's brow is furrowed by care, be sure a tyrant's finger has traced those lines ! See for yourselves, any morning, that mournful procession of students, with care-worn cheek, walking with slow and fearful whispers. The very thought of the future seems to fill their souls with terror. And what is the reason of it all ? There is one man in France too many. I have watched him now for two long years. There is not a family throughout the land but can show some melancholy proof of this man's power. Our Parliament is humiliated to the dust, and the Presidents of our tribunals, whenever they have dared to speak for the King or his people, have been hounded out of office, and cast into prisons ! The infamy of it ! Who fills the most important offices of State ? Shameful and corrupted creatures who suck the blood as well as treasure of the land. Paris and her sea-ports taxed up to the hilt ! Her countryside ruined and pillaged by soldiers ; her peasants reduced to the plague-stricken corpses of their animals for food, and flying, whenever they may, to foreign parts. Such are the fruits of this novel brand of justice ! They have even dared to issue money with the image of the Cardinal Duke ! Look ! ”

And the Master of the Horse threw a handful of coins on to the floor, stamped with the head of Richelieu. A fresh murmur of hatred against the Cardinal arose in the room.

“ And the clergy ? Are they any happier, or more free from persecution ? Indeed, no. Bishops have been put on trial, against the common law, and the respect due to their persons. Cardinals have arisen from the very scum of the earth ! An archbishop has been seen commanding a horde of Algerian pirates ! The minister himself, in utter disregard of all reverence and piety, has caused himself to be elected General of the orders of Citeaux, Cluny and Prémontre, and thrown into prison any religious men who dared to lift up their voices in dissent. Jesuits, Carmelites, Cordeliers, Augustines and Jacobins have been compelled to elect vicars general

within their midst, that they may have no further need of communicating with their superiors in Rome! And why? That the Cardinal may become patriarch in France, and head of the Gallican Church!"

"Monstrous heresy! Monstrous!" cried out several voices at once.

"His movements are open for all to see, gentlemen! He is ready to consolidate his power, both spiritual and temporal. He has acquired the strongest positions throughout the country: the river cities and the principle towns on the coast—all the safety spots of the entire country are at his command, and it is for us to deliver our Sovereign from this oppression. 'The King and Peace' shall be our motto! And Providence must do the rest!"

This speech of Cinq-Mars had astonished everyone, including de Thou himself. Up to then nobody had heard him speak consecutively for any length of time, and he had never revealed in public the slightest signs of any aptitude for political affairs; on the contrary, he had gone to the length of affecting a supreme indifference to these matters, even towards his own chosen instruments, exhibiting nothing more than a virtuous indignation against the minister's increasing power, and refraining from advancing any of his own ideas, from fear of too far disclosing his own ambitious ends. The confidence he had aroused in himself was due to his courage and favoured position. For a few moments, therefore, surprise held them all silent—a silence that was broken almost immediately by one of those outbursts of enthusiasm common to all Frenchmen, young or old, when they are faced with a prospect of a fight of any kind.

Among those who came up to shake their young leader by the hand was the Abbé de Gondi, bounding like an excited kid.

"I have got my regiment all ready!" he cried; "the finest lot of men you could wish to see!" And then, turning to Marion de Lorme:

"*Parbleu*, mademoiselle, may I solicit your permission

to carry your colours? Your ribbon of grey, and your 'Order of the Match!' Your motto is perfectly charming!

" 'We burn to illuminate others!'

I only wish you could witness all the gallant deeds which are going to be performed under its name."

But the lovely Marion, who had but small love for the Abbé, began talking over his head to de Thou, which exasperated the little man to the last degree, and caused him to depart from her side in much dudgeon, drawing himself up to his full height, and ferociously twirling his mustachios.

All at once a sudden silence fell upon the company. A roll of paper had struck the ceiling and fallen at the feet of Cinq-Mars. The latter picked it up and smoothed it out with a quick glance around the room; but in vain they all conjectured from whence its source might be. All gathered round Cinq-Mars with expressions of the keenest curiosity and astonishment.

"He does not seem able to write my name particularly well," remarked the latter coolly, and, opening the paper, he began to read:

*"Quand bonnet rouge passera par la fenêtre,
À quarante onces on coupera la tête,
Et tout finera."*

"Gentlemen, there is a traitor within our midst!" he cried, and threw the paper on to the floor. "But—what matter if there is? We are not the men to be frightened by sanguinary words and phrases!"

"Search out the writer! Throw it in the fire!" cried out all the young men.

Nevertheless, the incident had created an unpleasant atmosphere; people only spoke in whispers, and each regarded his neighbour with suspicion. Some persons even took their leave. Marion de Lorme kept declaring that she would dismiss her household on the slightest

grounds of suspicion. But for all her efforts a certain coldness had fallen on the party. The first part of Cinq-Mars's speech had placed them in some doubt as to the attitude of the King, and this impulsive frankness on his part had left the weaker characters slightly shaken.

Gondi remarked on this to Cinq-Mars.

"Listen to me," he said softly. "I have studied meetings and conspiracies with the utmost care, and there are certain mechanical laws which all should know. You would do well to take my advice, for I have some influence within this party. You must address a few more words to them, and, if possible, in the spirit of contradiction. That always succeeds with Frenchmen; it will warm their fainting spirits. Once give them the idea that you have no desire to retain them against their will, and nothing will induce them to leave you."

The Master of the Horse saw the wisdom of these remarks, and, turning towards those whom he knew to be most compromised, he cried :

"Let me impress upon you, gentlemen, that not one of you is obliged to follow me; there are plenty of brave fellows awaiting us at Perpignan, and France is with us to a man. If any one of you wishes to withdraw before it is too late, let him speak up, and we will provide him with the means of withdrawing into safety."

But not one of them wished to listen to any such proposal, and the only result was to re-double their vows of hatred against the Cardinal.

Nevertheless, Cinq-Mars still continued to question certain members, chosen by him with the utmost care. He finished with Montrésor, who declared he would himself run his own sword through his body at the mere thought of retreat, and also Gondi, who drew himself up magnificently as he exclaimed :

"M. Cinq-Mars, my only retreat lies in the Archbishopric of Paris and the Isle of Notre Dame; and I will undertake to make it sufficiently strong to shelter me against my enemies."

"And you?" he asked de Thou.

"At your disposal," replied his friend, with a soft voice and downward look, anxious not to give even those words an air of undue importance.

"Since you wish it, I will accept," said Cinq-Mars, "and, believe me, my sacrifice is the greater of the two."

Then, turning to his audience :

"Friends and confederates," he cried, "in you I behold the last men in France ; for, after Montmorency and les Soissons, it is you alone have dared to raise a hand in defence of our ancient liberties. Should Richelieu triumph, the old institutions of monarchy will perish, together with ourselves. In place of Parliament, the Court will reign supreme. But, once we are victors, France will have us to thank for the preservation of her ancient safeguards. All the same, gentlemen, it is a pity to spoil a ball on that account ! You hear the music playing, and the ladies are awaiting you. Let us go and dance."

"And the violins shall be played by the Cardinal," added Gondi.

The young folks clapped their hands and laughed, and all went up to the ballroom much as they would have gone out to the field of battle.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CONFESSIONAL

It was the day after the gathering at Marion de Lorme's. A thick snow covered the roofs of Paris, and lay in the wide gutters and the streets, where it drifted into little greyish heaps, furrowed by the wheels of an occasional passing coach.

It was eight o'clock and a dark evening ; the noisy town was silenced for once by the thick carpet that winter had cast upon it, muffling the sound of the wheels on the cobbles, and the tread of horse or man.

In a narrow street, winding around the ancient church of Saint Eustache, a man wrapped in a cloak, was walking slowly up and down, evidently awaiting the appearance of someone or something; now and again he would seat himself on one of the stone posts, sheltering his body from the dripping snow by the horizontal row of carved saints that extend along the entire roof of the building, resembling so many birds of prey, with folded wings ready to pounce upon their quarry. Frequently the old man would unfasten his cloak and beat his arms against his breast to warm himself, or else blow upon his fingers, which were protected from the cold by an enormous pair of buff leather gloves. At length he became aware of a little shadow gliding towards him on the snow, and a small voice addressed him tremblingly.

"Ah! Santa Maria, these dreadful countries of the North! Oh for beloved Mantua again! What would I not give to be back there, my dear old Grandchamp!"

"Ssh! Speak softly," the old servant answered brusquely. "The Cardinal's ears are behind every wall in Paris, and especially where churches are concerned. Has your mistress gone in? My master was waiting for her at the door.

"Yes, yes, she went straight into the church."

"Be quiet!" said Grandchamp. "The chime of the clock is cracked. It is a bad omen!"

"But it is sounding a lover's meeting."

"To me it is sounding a tragedy. Do not speak to me, Laura. I can see three cloaks coming along."

Three men passed by. Grandchamp followed them to make sure of the road they took, and then returned to his seat with a heavy sigh.

"It is a cold, snowy night, Laura, and I am an old man. M. le Grand might just as well choose another servant to keep watch for him by the hour like this while he makes love. It is all very fine for you to go carrying their love letters and ribbons and portraits and all the rest of the fal-lals; but I ought to be

treated with more consideration, and M. le Marèchal does not do it. It takes an old servant to make a house really respected.

"Has your master been here a long time, *caro amico*?"

"Ah! You and your *caro amico*! Can you not cease to pester me with your foreign jargon? We had been freezing here for the better part of an hour when you arrived with your mistress. Time enough for me to smoke three Turkish pipes. Do your duty, and go and see if there is anyone suspicious prowling around the other doors of the church. Since there are only two of us for scouts we must keep on the look out.

"Ah! Signor Jesu! Not to have a soul to say a friendly word to in weather like this! And my poor mistress! To come all the way on foot from the hotel de Nevers! Ah! *Amore qui regna, amore!*"

"Off with you, my little Italian baggage, and be about your business. I have had enough of your musical language for the moment!"

"Ah! Jesus! How you growl at me, dear Grandchamp! You were far more amiable in the old days at Chaumont, when you used to speak to me of *miei occhi* and how black they were."

"Will you be silent, you little chatter-box? Once for all let me tell you that your Italian tongue is good for nothing but jugglers and acrobats and performing dogs!

"Ah! *Italia mia*! If you would only listen to me, Grandchamp, you would hear the language of Divinity. If you were only a gallant *uomo*, like the one who wrote this song to a Laura, just like I am." And she began to sing in a low voice:

"Lieti fiori e felice, e ben nate erbe
Che Madona pensanda premer sole;
Piagga ch'ascolti su dolci parole
E del bel piede alcun vestigio serbe!"

The old soldier was but little accustomed to the voice

of a young girl, and for the most part, when addressing a woman, his tone varied between an awkward politeness and ill humour. But on this occasion the Italian song seemed to have a softening effect, and caused him to twist his moustache—always with him a sign of embarrassment or distress ; he even produced a curious sound which did duty for a laugh, and said :

“ Pretty enough, in very truth ! It reminds me of the siege of Casal—but now be quiet, my good child—I have not seen the Abbé Quillet come in yet, and that worries me. He must have arrived some time ago, before our young lovers.”

Laura, fearing to be dispatched alone to the Square of Saint Eustache, assured him she was quite certain that the Abbé Quillet had arrived, and continued :

“ Ombrose selve, ove percote il sole
Che vi fa co' reggi alte e superbe.”

“ *Hon !* ” grumbled the old man, “ here am I with my feet in the snow, and water dripping down my ears, cold in my head, and death in my heart, and you must needs go singing to me of violets and the sunshine, and love and the green grass ! Can you not keep quiet for once ? ”

And, snuggling up under the stone archway, he allowed his old head of white hair to sink between his two hands, and there sat motionless and plunged in thought. Laura dared not speak to him again.

But, while her waiting maid had been seeking Grandchamp, Marie with a trembling hand had pushed open the large doorway leading into the church, and there found Cinq-Mars, disguised, awaiting her with much anxiety. No sooner had she recognised him than she walked quickly into the church, holding her velvet mask in front of her face, and hastened to secrete herself in a confessional, while Henri carefully closed the door by which she had entered. Having made sure that it could not be opened from outside, he went and knelt down beside her, as a matter of habit, in the penitential spot.

Having arrived an hour before, with his old attendant, he had found the door on the latch, a sure and certain sign that his old tutor, the Abbé Quillet, was waiting for him in his accustomed place. His precaution to guard against all form of surprise had kept him on guard by the door until Marie's arrival. Delighted as he was with the promptness of the old Abbé, he thought it best not to leave his post, even to go and thank him. For he regarded him almost as a second father, and treated the old priest with but little ceremony.

The old parish church of Saint Eustache was dim and dark; but the lamp was kept burning continuously, together with four large wax candles which, from their places above the holy-water basins, attached to the principal pillars, threw down a reddish light upon the blue and black marble of the empty nave. The light could scarcely penetrate to the niches in the aisles of the sacred building. The confessional was in one of the smallest and darkest of chapels. A thick iron grille ran across it, raised to such a height as to exclude from sight all but the little dome and wooden crucifix before which knelt Cinq-Mars and Marie of Mantua. They were scarcely able to see one another, and found that, according to custom, the Abbé Quillet had entered and been listening to them for some little time. They could just catch a glimpse of his hood behind the ironwork. Henri d'Effiat drew slowly near, for he knew that he was about to take stock of his destiny. He was no longer appearing before his King, but before a Sovereign more precious still, for whose sake he had undertaken the enormous task before him. Her faith was about to be tested, and he trembled at the thought.

He trembled still more at finding his mistress kneeling face to face with him, chiefly because, at the sight of her beautiful face, he became more terribly aware than ever of all the happiness that might never be his. He dared not be the first to speak, and remained for a few moments silently looking at her head in the shadow—that little youthful head on which rested all his hopes. Notwith-

standing his love for her, there were times—especially when he saw her before him—when he could not but feel afraid at having staked so much for a young girl whose passion could never be more than a dim reflection of his own, and who already had scarcely realised his own sacrifices—his whole personality distorted for her sake, subjected to Court intrigues, and the torments of ambition, a prey to wrong-thinking, and all the gloom and violence of conspiracy. Up to now, in their secret and most harmless interviews, she had received all news of progress in his career with the delighted pleasure of a child, without in the least appreciating the weariness of every step that leads to honours. She would ask him in the simplest way when he thought he would be Constable, and when they would be married, much as she might have asked him when he would be going to the Place de Carrousel, and if the weather was likely to be fine. Hitherto he had only smiled at her ignorance and her questionings, so forgivable in a girl of eighteen, born on a throne, accustomed to every kind of grandeur, and accepting it all as a natural part of life. But to-day he was looking at her character in a more serious light. Still under the influence of yesterday's meeting, with the promises of his comrades ringing in his ears to support him in this vast enterprise, he found himself questioning the very personality for whose sake it had been conceived. He listened eagerly for her first words, with a secret fear lest her innocence might not, after all, be construed as lightness of heart, and resolved to leave no stone unturned to probe into her mind.

"Oh, Henri, I have been so frightened," she exclaimed, on entering the confessional. "Here you make me come to you without attendants, without even a coach—and the whole time I am terrified lest my own people should see me coming out of the Hotel de Nevers. Must I go on much longer concealing myself like a culprit in this way? The Queen was displeased the last time I talked to her, and if she mentions the matter again it will be with that severe manner of hers which you know as well

as I do, and which always makes me cry. I am terribly afraid."

She ceased talking, and Cinq-Mars's only reply was a deep sigh.

"Are you not going to speak to me?" said she.

"Are these really your only fears?" demanded Cinq-Mars bitterly.

"Do you want me to have worse than that? Oh, Henri, what a way to speak to me! Are you cross with me for coming a little late?"

"Too soon, madame, a great deal too soon for the things I have got to tell you, for I see already our paths are drifting apart."

Marie, grieved and hurt at the bitterness in his voice, now began to cry.

"Alas—alas—what have I done?" she cried, "that you should call me 'madam' and treat me in this way?"

"Console yourself," replied Cinq-Mars still with the same note of irony. "Of a truth it is I, and not you, who is guilty. Guilty, not towards you, but for your sake."

"Have you done something dreadful? Determined to kill somebody? Oh no—I know how good you are."

"Are you to count for nothing in my projects, then?" cried Cinq-Mars. "Did I misconstrue your thoughts when you looked at me that day, in the Queen's chamber. Have I lost the secret of reading your eyes? The fire that burned in them—perhaps it was love of Richelieu, after all? Where is that admiration you vowed for the man who would dare to speak freely to the King? Has everything been a pretence?"

Marie burst into tears. "You always speak to me so hardly now," she cried, "and I have done nothing to deserve it. Just because I do not talk to you about this terrible conspiracy, do you think I have forgotten all about it? Do you not think I am unhappy enough as it is? Do you want to see me cry? Then you have succeeded. I cry a great deal in secret, Henri. If I have said nothing to you, at our last meetings, on this dreadful

subject, it was from fear of learning too much. Have I any other thought in my mind but your personal danger? Do I not know too well that it is for my sake alone that you incur these risks! Alas! And if you are fighting on my account, have I too not to face attacks just as cruel in their way? You are happier than I am, since you have only hatred to deal with, while I have friendship. The Cardinal will oppose you with his weapons and his men, whereas the Queen, our gentle Anne of Austria, has nothing to offer but the tenderest of counsels, caresses, and sometimes even tears."

"A sweet and irresistible compulsion," said Cinq-Mars, with the utmost bitterness, "towards the throne that they would force upon you. I realise the full force of their persuasions, but before yielding to them, madame, you have certain promises of which to free yourself."

"Alas! Alas! In God's name what has happened?"

"In God's name, Who is both above us and against us," cried Henri, "the King has betrayed me!"

The Abbé exclaimed in horror from within the confessional, and Marie cried out.

"The very thing I foresaw and dreaded! And—you call it my fault?"

"He betrayed me even as he shook me by the hand," continued Cinq-Mars, "and by means of that villain Joseph, who, but for me, would by now have been a corpse."

With a horrified gesture the Abbé half opened his little door.

"No need to fear on that account, my father," Henri went on. "No pupil of yours could descend to weapons of assassination. Mine are of a different kind, and will soon be revealed to the eyes of men. But first I have a duty to perform—a very sacred duty. See—your son kneels before you. Alas! Happiness was not to be my portion long, and it may be I am now about to destroy it by your hand—the very hand that first bestowed its blessing on me!"

As he spoke he opened the partition which separated

him from the old priest, who, pulling his hood down over his face, advanced towards him in mute astonishment.

"Take back"—said Cinq-Mars, in a voice which shook a little—"take back this ring, and restore it to the Duchess of Mantua. I have no right to keep it, neither shall she bestow it upon me a second time; for I am no longer the man I was when first her vows were made to me."

The priest took the ring and hastily passed it through the bars of the grille opposite Marie, with an apparent indifference which somewhat astonished Cinq-Mars.

"My father!" said he. "Then you too have changed?"

By this time Marie had ceased to weep. Raising her sweet voice, the tones of which went faintly echoing through the stone vaulting above their heads, she said:

"Henri! Try not to be angry. I do not understand you any more. How can we set asunder what God has joined, and how could I possibly desert you now that I see you so unhappy? Even if the King no longer loves you, of a certainty he will do you no harm, seeing that he has never tried to injure even the Cardinal, whom we all know he does not love. You think yourself ruined, just because he does not wish to be rid of his old adviser? Why—you have only to await the return of his friendship, and put out of your mind these plotting men who terrify me so! If their last hope has gone, I shall thank God for it, for then I shall know you are safe. What is the matter with you, dear Henri, that you should make us grieve like this without a cause? The Queen loves us both, and we are both young. We can wait. The future is still beautiful, since we are together, and sure of each other. Tell me what the King said to you at Chambord. I followed you with my eyes as long as I could see you. Ah! but how dreadfully miserable I was that hunting day!"

"I tell you he has betrayed me," repeated Cinq-Mars; "in a way you could never believe. For did you not see how he shook us by the hand that day, passing from me

to his brother, and the Duc de Bouillon, acquainting himself with the smallest details of the conspiracy—the very day, even, when Richelieu would be arrested at Lyon, at the place of his exile. (They wanted his death, but the memory of my father made me plead for his life.) The King declared that he would arrange everything himself at Perpignan; and, none the less, it was Joseph, that accursed spy, who had entered his room that very morning! Oh, Marie! How can I admit it to you? From the very moment that I heard it my faith was broken for evermore. I doubted everything on earth, and the very pivot round which my world revolved, lies shattered now with the good faith of a king. I saw our dreams crumbled into ruins; within an hour the conspiracy dissolved, and you lost to me for ever. One thing remained for me to do. And I have done it."

"What have you done?" cried Marie.

"I have signed the Spanish treaty which was in my hands."

"In God's name! Tear it up!"

"It has been dispatched."

"By whom?"

"Fontrailles."

"Call him back!"

"By now he must have ridden through the pass d'Oloron," said Cinq-Mars, rising to his feet. "All is ready at Madrid, and at Sedan too. Armies are awaiting me, Marie—armies, I tell you! And Richelieu in the midst of them! He is tottering, and but one blow is needed to unseat him! And then for ever you belong to Cinq-Mars the Victorious."

"Cinq-Mars the Rebel," she replied with a shudder.

"Well, rebel if you like, but still the Favourite, none the less! Rebel, and criminal, and fit for the scaffold—I know it!" cried the boy, in an outburst of passion, as he fell once more on to his knees; "but a rebel through love, a rebel for your sake, whom I will win with my sword for ever and for ever!"

"Alas! A sword steeped in the blood of your own countrymen? What difference between that and the hireling's dagger?"

"For pity's sake stop, Marie! Let kings abandon me if they will, and soldiers break their faith, but one word from you will utterly undo me! Besides, the time for thinking has gone by. I have committed myself on the side of crime, and for that very reason begin to doubt my worthiness of you. Give me up, then, Marie, and take your ring again."

"I cannot," said the girl. "Whatsoever you may be, I am your wife."

"You hear her, father?" cried out Cinq-Mars, beside himself with happiness; "then once again unite us with your blessing, for faith has joined us now, more blessed even than love itself. May she be mine for the rest of my days on earth!"

Without a word, the Abbé opened the door of the confessional and walked away rapidly, being outside the door of the church before Cinq-Mars could rise and follow him.

"Where are you going? What is the matter?" he cried out after him. But there was no reply.

"In Heaven's name be silent, or I am lost," Marie implored him. "He must have heard somebody in the church."

But Cinq-Mars, far too agitated to reply, hurried along the pillars, searching his tutor, till he arrived at a door that was locked. Drawing his sword, he made the round of the church, and having arrived at the door guarded by Grandchamp, he called to him and listened.

"Leave him for the present," said a voice at the corner of the street. After which horses could be heard galloping away.

"Grandchamp! Where are you?" cried out Cinq-Mars.

"Help me, Henri! Come and help me, my dear boy!" sounded the voice of Abbé Quillet.

"But where have you been? You are giving us away!" cried out the Squire-in-Chief, as he drew near

to him. But he soon realised that his old tutor, hatless, in the falling snow, was in no state to reply to him.

"They seized me and robbed me!" he cried. "The villains! They stopped me from crying out; they stuffed a handkerchief into my mouth!"

Attracted by the noise, Grandchamp now came up, rubbing his eyes like a man just roused from sleep. The terrified waiting maid ran into the church to seek her mistress. They all hurried in again to reassure Marie, and gathered around the old Abbé.

"The rascals! They tied my hands together, as you see. There were more than twenty of them. And they took the church key from me."

"What! Just now?" exclaimed Cinq-Mars; "but why did you leave us?"

"Leave you? But I have been here for the past two hours!"

"Two hours?" exclaimed Henri, horrified.

"Alas! Miserable old rascal that I am," moaned Grandchamp. "My master was in peril and I slept! For the first time in my life!"

"Then it was not you with us in the confessional?" demanded Cinq-Mars, in an agony of apprehension, and he felt Marie, trembling, seize him by the arm.

"What?" cried the Abbé, "did you not see the imposter who took my key from me?"

"No! Who?" they all exclaimed at once.

"Father Joseph!" replied the good priest.

"Fly! You are lost!" moaned Marie.

CHAPTER IX

THE STORM

In the midst of that glorious chain of mountains known as the Pyrenees, blue pyramids capped with snow, set in the heart of field and forest, a narrow path lies concealed, cut in the dried-up bed of a precipitous waterfall. It winds its way amid the rocks, disappearing

under bridges of thick snow, circling around ravines with torrents far below, and leading upwards and ever upwards to the twin heights of Urdoz and Oloron, with summits wreathed in mist. Follow its tortuous windings through this strange new land of hills and valleys, descending ever to the right, and you will leave France at your back, and enter Spain. You may search in vain for the track of a mule's hoof ; it is as much as a man may do to stand on his two feet, with the aid of stout cord shoes to keep from slipping, and an iron-shod staff to stick into the rocky crevices. In the summer months the *pâstour* may be seen, brown-hooded, driving his long-fleeced troops, led by the bearded ram. No sound can be heard within this land of rocks except the tinkling of the sheep bells, with their sweet haphazard melody to take the traveller by surprise, and rejoice the heart of the old shepherd, wild and morose. But when the long autumn months come round again, the mountains are wrapped from head to foot within a shroud of snow, except for this one deeply hollowed path, and passes swept by rushing torrents, together with scattered granite rocks of fantastic shapes, resembling so many petrified bones of a world long dead and gone.

Then may be seen fleet-footed herds of chamois, hastening to take possession of their aerial home, with crooked-back horns, bounding from rocky point to rocky point, as though they floated on the very wind itself ; dark flocks of rooks and crows flutter ceaselessly around the water holes and natural springs, transforming them to strange and sombre dove-cots, while the brown bear, her woolly cubs trailing and frolicking around her on the snow, pads slowly down, driven from her snug retreat by the relentless grip of frost. And creatures wilder still are brought by winter's advent to this land of desolation. Now is the smuggler's time to build himself his wooden hut, close to the boundary line, fixed part by nature, part by policy ; a spot of mysterious trafficking and secret intercourse, carried out on behalf of the two Navarres, in the heart of the winds and mists.

Some two months after the scenes we have just described in Paris, two men on foot might have been seen, halting upon this narrow track, leading from Spain into France. It was midnight, and both were exhausted and frightened. From the mountains came the sound of shots.

"The infernal devils—hounding us down in this manner," growled one of them. "They have brought me to my last gasp, and but for you I should be a prisoner."

"You will be a prisoner yet, with that accursed bit of paper of yours, if you waste your time in words. Listen! They are firing now from the rock of St. Pierre de l'Aigle. They think we are going down the slope towards Limacon, but soon they will find out their mistake. On with you; we must get down at all costs."

"But how? I cannot see any more."

"We must get down, I tell you. Take hold of my arm."

"Hold me up—I keep slipping in these accursed boots," said the first traveller, cautiously testing the ground in front of him before daring to trust his feet on the slippery rock.

The other gave him a shove. "Will you get on," he cried, "one of the rascals has got above us already."

And, in truth, the shadow of a man armed with a long gun appeared upon the snow above their heads. The two adventurers held their breath. But it passed on its way, and they continued to descend.

"Our chance is gone," said the man who was helping his companion. "They have managed to cut us off. Give me that devil's parchment of yours; I am dressed as a smuggler, and may pass for one of them seeking refuge; but there is no chance for you with the clothes you have on."

"You are right," replied the other. And he paused in the midst of his clambering, and handed to his friend a hollow roll of wood. At this moment a shot whizzed past them and buried itself in the snow at their feet.

"A warning," said the first man. "Roll to the bottom, and if you reach it alive follow the track to the left as far as Gave and Saint-Marie, then to the right through Oloron, where you will pick up the road to Pau, and be in safety. Roll—quickly——"

As he spoke he gave a push to his friend, and without deigning to bestow a further glance upon him, continued on his way, neither up nor down the mountain, but following a horizontal line, clinging on to stones and branches and even roots with the dexterity of a wild cat. In a little while he found himself again on solid earth and before a little hut of wood planks, through which a light could be seen shining. The wanderer walked around it much in the manner of a hungry wolf, and bringing his eye close to one of the cracks, saw something which apparently decided him, for without any hesitation he pushed open the rickety door, devoid of any kind of lock, and walked in. The whole building shook with the force of the knock from his fist, and he noticed it was divided in two by a partition. In the first, a large candle of yellow wax was burning, and crouching in a corner on the damp earth, with the snow dripping down on her through the wooden roof, was a young girl, pale and emaciated beyond description. Her long black locks, matted and covered with dust, hung slovenly fashion down her coarse brown frock; the red shawl of the Pyrenees was wrapped around her head and shoulders; she was looking downwards, and spinning from a little distaff attached to her girdle. The man's entrance seemed in no way to disturb her.

"Come—come—my lass; get up and give me something to drink. I am both tired and thirsty."

The girl made no reply, and without raising her eyes continued to spin diligently.

"Do you hear me?" asked the stranger, pushing her with the point of his boot; "go and tell your master, whom I saw from outside, that a friend has come to see him, but first give me something to drink. I am going to spend the night here."

The girl replied in a husky voice, and without pausing in her work :

“ I drink the snow as it melts on the rocks, or the green scum as it floats on the waters of the marshes ; but when I am very thirsty they let me drink from the iron springs. When I sleep, the lizard crawls over my face like ice ; but when I have groomed the mule, and groomed him well, they throw me some hay, and the hay is warm—the hay is warm and good—and I wrap it around my marble feet—— ”

“ What is all this you are chattering about ? ” asked Jacques. “ I was not asking about you.”

But still she went on :

“ They made me hold a man while they killed him ! Oh—but the blood spurted out all over my hands ! May God pardon me, if such a thing can be ! They made me hold his head and the bucket with the red water in it. Dear God ! And I who was wedded to him ! And always they throw the bodies into the snow, but the vulture finds them out ; she lines her nest with the hair from their heads. I see you now before me full of life, but soon I shall be seeing you dripping with blood and pale as death.”

The stranger shrugged his shoulders, whistling as he crossed the room and pushed open the other door ; there he discovered the man whom he had seen through the chinks in the wall. With a blue Pyrenees cap on his head, and wrapped in an enormous cloak, he was seated on a mule's saddle, stooping over a brazier, while he smoked a cigar and emptied the leather bottle placed at his side. The light of the glowing coals illuminated his skinny yellow face, and cast its brightness upon the room, around which pack saddles were placed to serve as seats. On seeing the new-comer he lifted his head, but made no attempt to rise.

“ Well, Jacques,” said he, “ and so it's you again ? Four years since I have seen you, but I should know you anywhere, you rascally brigand, with that good-for-nothing face of yours. Sit down there and have a drink.”

"Yes—here I am again all right. But what about you, Houmain? I thought I should find you a full-fledged judge at least!

"And I was thinking of you as a Captain in the Spanish army, Jacques!

"As a matter of fact that is exactly what I have been, until I got taken prisoner; but I disposed of that little difficulty quite nicely, and have gone back to the old life again, the old free life of the smuggler!"

"Good for you!" exclaimed Houmain. "We are the right breed of fellows, when all is said and done. But what tracks have you been working? For I have never once seen you since I took to the life myself again."

"Tracks which you would never have known how to handle," cried Jacques.

"And what have you brought with you?"

"Secret goods. My mules will arrive to-morrow."

"What are they? Silk sashes? Cigars? Wool?"

"You will know later, my boy," replied the desperado. "Hand over that bottle and let me quench my thirst."

"Drink away, 'tis the right sort of stuff! We bandalieros have nothing to complain of up here. *Ai' Jaleo! Jaleo!* Drink away! I have some friends coming presently."

"What friends?" demanded Jacques, letting the bottle drop.

"No need to worry—or stop drinking—I will tell you later, and then we can all sing a Spanish *Tirana* together."

The adventurer picked up the bottle again and took a good quiet pull.

"What is that she-devil of yours I saw in the next room?" he asked. "She looks only half alive."

"Oh—that—she is only mad. Go on drinking and I will tell you later."

And taking out of his belt a long dagger with a double saw blade, Houmain proceeded to poke the fire with it, and say:

"You must know first of all—unless you know it already—that over there (waving his hand towards the direction of France), that old wolf of a Richelieu is leading them all the devil's tattoo."

"Is he indeed?" said Jacques.

"Why, I should say so. He is called the King's king already. Had you heard? But there is a little fellow almost as great as he is for ever at the King's side, and he is called Monsieur le Grand. And this little fellow has been at Perpignan for the past month, where he commands almost the entire army; but the old wolf is still at Narbonne, and is drawing pretty near his end. As for the King, he is this to-day and that to-morrow (with a gesture of the hand), touch and go—touch and go. But in the meantime, till the royal mind is made up, I am a Cardinal's man, and entirely at his disposal, as I have been these past three years, ever since he sought me out. Listen while I tell you. There was a certain little matter for which he required people of strength and spirit. Therefore he sent for me to be his Lieutenant of Criminal Cases. They told me it was a very pretty post. But I soon found it was only a business just like ours here, and rather dirtier work if anything, for it means more killing. All the same it has its advantages. Each affair is made well worth your while."

"So it should be," remarked Jacques.

"Behold me, then, in my scarlet robe. I had a yellow one made—the colour of sulphur—for some fine fellow who was priest at Loudon and had got into a convent of nuns like a wolf among the lambs; and I had him burned in it."

"Ah! Ah! I must say you know how to tell a good story!" cried Jacques. And he roared with laughter.

"Go on drinking," continued Houmain. "Yes, Jago, you can take my word for it that by the time I had done with him there was nothing to remember him by but a little black heap of cinders, just like the ones you see me stirring about with my dagger here. The stuff we are

made of ! That is what we shall be like one day, in hell ! ”

“ Keep your jokes for folk of your own kidney, and please remember I am a religious man ! ” said the other with the utmost gravity.

“ Well, well, for all I know you may be,” replied the other. “ At any rate, Richelieu is my pigeon, and I counted on this little business bringing me at least five hundred piastres ; for Armand Duplessis knows how to pay his people. I have nothing against him on that score, except that the money is not his to give away. But that makes no difference to me. I had set my heart on putting this coin into the old business, and I came back here for that purpose. Things are going well with us, I am glad to say. There have been very few of us killed, and goods are going up in value.”

“ What was that I saw ? ” cried out Jacques. “ Lightning at this time of year ? ”

“ Yes, the storms have begun. We have had two already. There is a great cloud coming up. Do you hear the thunder ? But—what matter ? Drink away. It is nearly one in the morning, and we will see the night through with the bottle. I was about to tell how I got to know our President, a curious fellow named Laubarde-mont. I do not know if you know him ? ”

“ Yes, just a little,” replied Jacques ; “ a stiff-necked old miser. Never mind. Go on.”

“ Well, then, as we had no secrets from one another, I confided my trade projects to him, and asked him not to forget his old comrade-of-the-law, whenever there was a chance of putting business in my way. And I must say he has been as good as his word.”

“ Ah ! Indeed ? ” replied Jacques. “ And what has he done for you ? ”

“ First of all he brought his own niece to me here, a couple of years ago. You saw her behind the door.”

“ His niece ! ” cried out Jacques, starting to his feet. “ And you treat her like a slave ! *Demonio !* ”

“ Go on drinking,” continued Houmain, softly poking

the embers with his dagger ; “ it was his wish I should take her. Sit down.”

Jacques sat down.

“ It is my belief,” went on the smuggler, “ that he would not have been too sorry if—well—you know what I mean. He would rather have seen her below the snow than above it, but not to put her there with his own hands, being, as he told me himself, always good to his own kith and kin.”

“ I know all about that,” broke in the stranger, “ but—— ”

“ You can quite understand that a man living at the Court, as he does, would not care to have a mad niece about him. Naturally. If I had continued to wear my scarlet robe, I should have done just the same, in the circumstances. But we have no appearances to keep up here—as you see—and so I took her as my servant. And she has shown better sense than I should have believed her capable of, although she never says anything but one word, and first of all she would try and behave like a fine lady. But now she grooms down a mule as well as any lad. She has had a touch of fever these past few days ; but it will run its course, one way or another. Ah ! Now mind you do not tell Laubardemont that she is still alive ; he would think I had kept her to work for me for reasons of economy.”

“ What ? Is Laubardemont here ? ” cried Jacques.

“ Go on drinking,” replied Houmain the imperturbable, himself providing an admirable example of his own favourite precept—for already the wine was making him drowsy and sentimental. “ This is not the first affair I have had with this devil of the mountains, let me tell you. He is my very good comrade, and I love him as myself, and I would have you drink to his health with me in this excellent wine of Jurancon here. It is the wine of that jolly good fellow, the late King Henry. Ah ! what an excellent life we fellows do lead, to be sure ! Spain on our right hand, and France on our left, and the best wine of both countries ! Wine ! Fairest of all the

gods, what would I not sacrifice to thee ? ” With which he broke off the neck of a bottle of white wine, and after a prolonged draught, continued the conversation, with the stranger’s eyes fixed fast upon him.

“ Oh, yes, Laubardemont is here, right enough, and I should say by now he is pretty frozen in his bones, for he has been scouring the mountains ever since evening began with the soldiers and a few comrades—real contraband devils of the right sort.”

“ But what are they hunting ? ” asked Jacques.

“ Oh, a merry little affair,” said the drunkard. “ They are after a couple of rascals who are trying to import sixty thousand Spanish soldiers on a piece of paper they bear in their pockets. That puzzles you, eh ? Maybe you do not quite catch my meaning. All the same I speak nothing but truth. In their pockets, I tell you ! ”

“ I understand perfectly,” replied Jacques, feeling for his dagger inside his belt, and glancing towards the door.

“ Very good, my limb of Satan—and now for a *Tirana*. Pick up your bottle, light your cigar and sing.”

Whereon the reeling man began to shout forth a Spanish drinking song, punctuated by copious draughts from the leathern bottle, while Jacques, still on his saddle, regarded him gloomily by the light of the glowing coals, revolving in his mind the best course for himself to pursue.

“ Behold the jolly smuggler, who knows not what fear is. World, I defy thee . . . I can look after myself, and all men respect the sight of me.

Ai, ai, jaleo ! Girls, girls, my pretty little girls, who will buy me a skein of black thread ?

Jaleo ! Jaleo ! My horse is weary. I will walk, I will run by his side.”

Suddenly a light flashed through the little window, and the room was filled with the smell of sulphur, followed by a loud explosion. The next moment the cabin shook, and a beam fell down.

"The house! The house!" cried out the drunken man. "The devil is in it! Where are our friends?"

"Sing away," said Jacques, and drew up his saddle seat nearer to that of Houmain.

The latter drank to renew his courage, and continued his song:

"Ai! Ai! Ai! The song goes round, and firing is heard
in the mountain.

Ai! Ai! Ai! My little horse, save me if you can.

My little horse with the white forelock!

Girls, girls, my pretty little girls, who will buy me the black
thread?"

As he sang the last words, he reeled forward and fell on his back. Jacques immediately leapt towards the door, which now opened suddenly, and brought him face to face with the pale wild countenance of the mad girl. He recoiled.

"The judge!" said she, and tottered into the room, falling prostrate upon the cold earth floor. Jacques tried to raise her with his foot. But now appeared another face, full of rage and astonishment—that of a tall man, wrapped in a mantle dripping with snow. Again Jacques recoiled, with a laugh of mingled rage and horror. It was Laubardemont, followed by his armed men. The two gazed at one another.

"Eh! Eh! *Ca—a—ma—ra—you* scoundrel!" gurgled Houmain, raising himself with difficulty, "and are you a Royalist after all?"

But, at the sight of the two men gazing at one another as though petrified, he relapsed into silence, with the strange double consciousness of a drunken man, and staggered over to try and pick up the girl, lying stretched between the judge and the captain. It was the former who spoke first, followed by exclamations on the part of all his followers.

"It is he!" they cried. "The other has got away!"

Jacques retreated towards the split planks which formed the wall of the rickety hut; he wrapped his cloak

around him, and stood like a bear at bay, outnumbered by the pack, while, in order to create a diversion, and give him a moment in which to think, he shouted in a harsh loud voice :

"The first to pass by this brazier and the body of this girl, is a dead man !" And he pulled his dagger from beneath his cloak.

At this moment, Houmain, on his knees, turned back the girl's head ; her eyes were closed. He dragged her into the firelight, towards the brazier.

"God in Heaven !" exclaimed Laubardemont, his fright getting the better of him ; "Jeanne here still !"

"Rest at ease, my good sir," muttered Houmain thickly, still trying in vain to lift the lids of the girl's dark eyes, and to raise her head, which fell back like a damp rag, "rest at ease—no need to vex yourself—she is dead—dead as a door nail——"

Jacques put his foot on the body, as though by way of defence, and with a ferocious laugh stooped over to the face of Laubardemont, saying in a half whisper :

"Let me pass. You shall not be compromised, my fine fellow of the Court. I will not reveal her as your niece, nor myself as your son."

Laubardemont pulled himself together, looked at his men gathering around him with lowered guns, and signing to them to withdraw a few paces, whispered :

"Give me the treaty, and you shall pass."

"There it is, in my belt. But if anybody touches it, I shall call you my father, for all the world to hear."

"Give it to me, and your life shall be spared."

"Let me pass, and I will forgive you for having ever bestowed it upon me."

"Still the same devil-may-care as ever ?"

"Precisely the same, oh dexterous cutter of throats !"

"What has a silly intriguing boy got to do with you ?" asked the judge.

"And what has an old man gorged with power got to do with you ?" retorted the other.

“Give me that paper. I have sworn an oath to secure it.”

“Leave it alone. I have sworn an oath to deliver it.”

“What sort of an oath do you swear, and to what sort of God?” asked Laubardemont.

“Not to yours,” replied Jacques; “nor to a crucifix of red-hot iron.”

But now Houmain staggered between the two men, laughing and reeling, and slapped the judge on the shoulder.

“You take a hell of a time to make yourselves understood, you two,” cried he. “Have you known each other in days long ago? He—he—he’s a devilish good fellow——”

“Known him before? Never!” cried Laubardemont. “I have never set eyes on him until this minute.”

At this moment, Jacques, who was slightly protected by the drunken man, and the cramped space in the room, made a dash at the feeble planks which formed the only wall, wrenched two of them away with a terrific pull, and vanished through the gap behind. Whereupon the entire wall collapsed behind him, and the room was filled with wind and storm.

“Eh! Eh! Hallo—*demonio*—*Santo demonio*! Where are you off to?” shouted the smuggler. “You have pulled my house down like a pack of cards. And the precipice is below!”

With the utmost caution they drew back the planks which remained, and looked over the abyss. A strange sight met their eyes. The storm was raging with all its force—a regular storm of the Pyrenees—from all points of the horizon. Great flashes of lightning streaked across the sky, and so fast did one flash follow another that no interval was apparent between them. The heavens in their entirety were transformed into a fiery vault, which now and again would flicker out for the brief fraction of a moment; so brief, that darkness, and not light,

became a thing to wonder at in this strange night. The sky was luminous from end to end, with swift rapid eclipses of its glory which served to make it only brighter still. The surface of the rocks and the mountain peaks, stood out in this crimson sheen like blocks of marble under a dome of burning brass, and in the hoar frost around them the effect was like that of an active volcano. The waters streamed down their sides, the colour of flames, and the snow, whirling around their summits, might have been dazzling, glistening lava.

Struggling within this chaos was a man, fighting for his life. His frantic efforts to keep on his feet only served to make him sink deeper and ever deeper within this whirling gulf ; already he was up to his knees, clinging convulsively to a huge boulder of ice, which stood like an enormous crystal bowl, radiating forth its beams into the lightness of the night. But now the bowl itself was beginning to dissolve ; bit by bit it was melting from its base, and preparing for its end. Under the carpet of snow could be heard the noise of the fragments of granite, breaking away and falling, falling to the uttermost depths below. But the man's chances were not quite exhausted. A distance of only four feet lay between him and Laubardemont.

" I am sinking ! " he cried. " Hold something out to me, and you shall have the treaty ! "

" Throw it to me, and I will reach you out this musket," said the judge.

" Then take it," cried the desperado, " since the devil himself fights for Richelieu ! " And leaving go his slippery support with one hand, he tossed the hollow piece of wood into the hut. Laubardemont leapt upon it like a tiger darting on its prey. Jacques held out his arm. But in vain. Slowly, slowly, he was seen to slither down, together with the huge dissolving boulder, which finally crumbled upon him, burying him without a sound, deep in the snow beneath.

" Miserable villain ! " he cried, as he was sinking. " You have played me false ! But you have not forced

me to give up the treaty ! I have given it you. . . do you hear me . . . Father ! ”

And then he disappeared completely, underneath the snow. Nothing marked the place where he had fallen. The dazzling white carpet still continued to reflect the lightning, as it flashed its darts across the sky, and the only noise to break the silence was the rolling of distant thunder, together with the water swirling round the rocks. For the men in the ruined hut stood gathered around the dead body and the living miscreant, and not a sound escaped their lips. They were frozen by horror and the fear of the Lord, Who rideth upon the whirlwind and directeth it to the ends of the earth.

CHAPTER X

ABSENCE

WHICH of us does not love to watch the drifting clouds, and follow their passage in the heavens ? Who has never envied the chartered freedom of their travels, whether they pass before our sight in rolling masses, driven by the storm, and coloured by the sun, or wend their peaceful way, a flotilla of boats dim-hued with gilded prows ; scattered clusters of fragility, threading their rapid course throughout the skies, graceful and slender birds of passage, fragments of opal broken from Heaven's treasury, or dazzling white as the mountain snow flakes flying on the wings of the wind ? Man, poor tardy traveller, can but envy the swiftness of their flight, exceeded only by the swiftness of his thoughts ; for in his mind's eye, he has seen them in one single day, traversing all the spots which hope and memory have endeared to him—places which have witnessed his sorrows and his joys, and other places, full of beauty, which his eyes have never seen, and still he hopes to see. No spot on earth so desolate,

no rocks so wild or plain so barren, that has not left its traces on the mind of man ; for like dilapidated ships, drifting our way towards inevitable wreck, we scatter our leavings behind us in the form of memories as we go.

Whither will they pass, those deep blue storm clouds of the Pyrenees ? See them driven along by the hot breath of the African wind, rolling and twirling in and out of one another, casting the lightning before them in the pathway of their flight, flaming torches to light them on their road, leaving in their wake long shafts of rain, trailing behind them like a vaprous robe. Over the mountain passes, fighting their way through every obstacle, and on to Béarn, the lovely lands of Henri IV. ; then on to Guienne and the conquests of Charles VI. ; thence on and ever on to Saint-ongue, Poitou, Touraine, won by the swords of Charles V. and Philip Augustus ; arriving last of all in the domain of Hugues Capet, there to pause in their pursuit, rumbling and grumbling, above the towers of Saint Germaine.

" Oh, Madame ! " exclaimed Marie of Mantua to the Queen, " do you see the storm clouds coming from the South ? "

" The South seems to require a good deal of your attention, my dear Marie, " said the Queen. Both women were leaning over the balcony.

" But Madame, that is where the sun comes from. "

" And storms, too, " replied the Queen, " as you see. I speak as a friend, my child, and believe me, those clouds over there cannot have seen anything that concerns your happiness. I would far rather see you turn your eyes towards Poland. Think what a lovely people for a Queen to rule. "

At this moment, the Prince Palatine, seeking shelter from the coming shower, rode rapidly past their window, followed by various members of his suite, young men clad in Turkish tunics, covered with diamond buttons, emeralds and rubies, cloaks of green and grey cloth.

he plumes of their horses nodding in the wind, and the whole procession sparkling with a sense of colour and adventure, to which the Court, by now, had become acclimatised. For a moment they stopped, and the Prince saluted them twice over; the slender steed on which he rode manœuvred round in such a way that it continued to face the royal ladies, rearing and neighing, tossing its head and shaking its mane by way of salutation, while the rest of the cavalcade did likewise as they rode by. Princess Marie first withdrew into the background, fearful lest the tears in her eyes should be discovered, but the gay and gallant spectacle beneath her windows was not to be resisted, nor could she restrain herself from crying out :

“ See what a beautiful horse the Prince Palatine rides ! And how wonderfully he handles it. The more it rears, the less he seems to think about it.”

The Queen smiled and said :

“ He is thinking of the little lady who could be Queen to-morrow, would she but make one sign, or throw him but one glance from those dark eyes of hers, instead of the naughty way she receives these poor strangers from abroad, and the sulky little pout she bestows on them whenever they appear.”

As she spoke these words, the Queen tapped Marie on her lips with her fan, at which the girl was forced to smile despite herself ; but the next moment she looked away with an inward reproach, and set herself to recapture that sad mood which so nearly had escaped her. And to do this, she must needs contemplate once more the heavy clouds floating overhead.

“ My poor child,” the Queen went on, “ you are doing all within your power to keep your faith and cling to your melancholy fate ; you are ruining your health by not sleeping and not eating ; you shed tears without ceasing, and pass your nights in contemplation, when you are not writing. But I warn you once again, you will succeed in nothing but making yourself ill, and destroying your own beauty and your prospects

of a throne. Your Cinq-Mars is an ambitious man who has overreached himself."

As Marie buried her face in her handkerchief and wept, Anne of Austria retired into her room, with a pretence of seeking some jewels on her toilet table; but after a short interval she returned once more towards the window. Marie was calmer now, gazing sadly in the distance, at the hills on the horizon, and the gathering storm overhead.

The Queen continued in a graver tone :

"God has been better to you than you deserve, Marie, and has protected you despite your indiscretions. He has saved you from a great danger; and that longing in your heart to sacrifice yourself, He has not allowed you to fulfil. You have been saved from the dangers of love by your own innocence. You are like a girl who has tried to kill herself with a deadly poison, and finds she has taken nothing after all but a draught of harmless water."

"Oh, Madame . . . Madame . . . Need you say these things to me? Am I not unhappy enough as it is?"

"Please do not interrupt me," said the Queen. "It is time you saw the situation in its true light. I have no desire to accuse you of ingratitude towards the Cardinal. I have too many reasons of my own not to love him! I was present at the birth of this conspiracy. All the same, dear Marie, you would do well not to forget that he was the only man in France to advocate war on behalf of the Duchy of Mantua, against all the wishes of the Court and the Queen Mother, and that it was he who wrested it from the Empire and from Spain, to bestow it on the Duc de Nevers, your father. The treaty was signed here in this very castle. You were almost a child in those days, but you should have been told, nevertheless. And now, here is a young man who, from motives of disinterested love (I wish to believe it every bit as much as you do), would have your benefactor murdered——"

" Oh, ^{Madame}, he would never do such a thing! Believe me, he has refused already—— "

" I have asked you not to interrupt me, Marie. I know that he is generous and loyal. I am willing to believe that, contrary to the custom of these days, he is sufficiently moderate to refrain from such extreme measures, and not to kill the Cardinal in cold blood, as the old Baron de Luz was killed by the Duc de Guise in the street. But will he be able to prevent it when once he has taken him by force? We cannot know that any more than he does. Only God can know the future. But what we do know is that for your sake he is trying to force it, and to plunge us into a civil war, doomed to failure, which for all we know may be on the point of breaking out as we speak. But, whatever fortune has in store, this conspiracy cannot succeed, for Monsieur is about to abandon it."

" What? Oh, Madame! "

" Please do as I ask you and listen to me. I am certain of what I say, and there is no need to explain. And what will your Master of the Horse do then? The King has verified all his predictions and gone to see the Cardinal. That means capitulation. But the Spanish treaty has been signed by now. If it is discovered what will become of M. Cinq-Mars? No need for you to turn so pale; we will save him—his life at all events—I promise you that. There is still time for that. At least I hope—— "

" Ah, Madame! Only hope! Then I am lost! " cried Marie faintly, for by now she was on the point of collapsing.

" Let us sit down," said the Queen, and taking a chair close to Marie, near the door, she continued :

" I have no doubt that Monsieur will include him in his plea for clemency with all the rest, but banishment will be the least penalty that they will suffer, and that means banishment for life. And then we shall have the Duchess of Nevers and Mantua, the Princess Marie de Gonzague, the wife of M. Henri d'Effiat, the exiled Marquis of Cinq-Mars! "

"Be it so, Madame! Then I will follow him into exile. I am his wife, and it is my duty," cried Marie in a flood of tears. "Would I could know him to be already there in safety."

"The dreams of a child of eighteen," said the Queen, with her arm around her. "Wake up, my child, wake up—indeed you must. I am far from denying M. Cinq-Mars any of his good qualities. He has character and intelligence, and a good deal of bravery, but there is nothing he can do for you now, and mercifully you are not his wife, nor even betrothed to him."

"But I am, Madame. I belong to him alone——"

"But without the Church's blessing," replied Anne of Austria, "which makes it no true marriage. No priest would have dared to join you together irretrievably. Neither has yours done so. He told me so himself. Be silent," she went on, laying her two beautiful hands across the girl's mouth. "Not one word. You were going to tell me how God has listened to your vows, how you cannot live without him, how your two fates are inseparable, and death alone can part you; all suitable fancies for a girl of your years, but never any more than fancies. One day you will smile at them, and rejoice that you have not had to weep your life away on their account. Of all those brilliant young women whom you see around me at my Court, there is not one who has not had at your age the same kind of lover's dream; who has not formed ties never-to-be-dissolved, and made eternal vows in secrecy. And now these dreams have vanished, the knots are cut, the vows forgotten; and none the less you now behold them as happy wives and mothers, surrounded by the honours due to their rank, laughing and dancing their evenings away. Oh, I know well what you would answer: They have never loved as you do. Is it not so? But you are wrong there, too, my dear little friend. They loved every bit as much as you do, and their tears were just as bitter. And now I will tell you the great mystery of life, the ignorance of which is making yours so in-

supportable. You see, my child, we all of us lead a dual existence. There is our secret life, our sentiments and our feelings, disturbing our inmost soul, while wrapping them around, is that superficial life that deals solely with the outward show of things. We can never be independent of other people, especially those of us who are borne into a high station. You may think, when you are alone, that you are the mistress of your fate, but you have only to be approached by one or two persons to feel the chains of your rank once more starting to gall you. How shall I put it to you? Think of yourself in solitude, brooding on all those passions in your soul that give rise to thoughts of ardent bravery and sacrifice, and suddenly a lackey enters, asking for your commands, and in an instant your dreams are shattered, and the spell is broken. In short, you are recalled to daily life again. Always it is a fight to the death between your heart's desire and the position to which you have been called. And the bitterness of the struggle enters into your soul, and is the cause of eternal self-reproach."

At these words Marie turned away her head.

"Yes, I know you believe yourself to be a wicked girl. Forgive me, dear Marie, but we poor mortals are so interdependent the one on the other, that I sometimes wonder whether these huge religious retreats that we sometimes see are not made just as much for the world as everything else. There is a refinement of despair, and solitude has its own laws of coquetry. I have heard that the most secluded hermits are unable to refrain from asking what others think of them. And this solicitude for public opinion is a good thing in itself, since it fights against our inward promptings and desires, and helps us to carry out the duties we are all so prone to forget. Once accept the burden provided for you by Fate, and you will feel—or so I hope—all the satisfaction of an exile returning to his people once again, or of an invalid beholding the sun and the day-light for the first time, after a long dark night of evil dreaming. It is the feeling of the soul which has found itself which you see

shining so peacefully out of the eyes of many people which once were filled with tears. Few women have not wept in this way in their time. You think you are a renegade in renouncing M. Cinq-Mars? But you are not bound to him in any way. You have more than kept your share of the bargain in refusing all the royal marriages within the last two years that have been proposed to you. And, after all, what has this devoted lover done for you? True, he has raised himself to favour to win your hand, but this very ambition, which you say arises out of his affection for you, may it not rather be the other way round?—that your love for him is needful to his ambition? I find it hard to believe in the disinterested attachment of a man so young as he is, so cool and calm in all his plots and plans, so self-contained in all his monstrous resolutions. And if you have been nothing all the time but a means instead of an end—what then?"

"I should still love him none the less," replied Marie.

"As long as he lives, Madame, I belong to him."

"But as long as I live," said the Queen with the utmost firmness, "I shall oppose it."

As she spoke these words, a shower of rain and hail poured down upon the balcony; the Queen took advantage of it to withdraw to her apartment, where the Duchess of Chevreuse, Mazarin, Madame de Guemenée and the Prince Palatine had been awaiting her some moments. The Queen walked in front of them all. Marie took up a place in the shadow near a curtain, where the redness of her eyes might not be observed. At first she tried not to take part in the lively conversation that was going on around, but a stray sentence attracted her attention. The Queen was showing to the Princess of Guemenée some diamonds she had just received from Paris.

"This is a coronet that does not belong to me. The King ordered it to be made for the future Queen of Poland, though as yet we know not who she will be." And then, turning to the Prince Palatine:

"We saw you go past our windows, Prince. What fair lady were you delighted to honour?"

"Mademoiselle the Duchess de Rohan," replied the Polish envoy.

Mazarin, who never left a stone unturned, and wormed secrets out of every conversation, turning them all to his uttermost advantage, approached the Queen, and said:

"A very timely mention of a lady's name, since we are talking of the throne of Poland!"

Marie, overhearing this, could contain herself no longer, and remarked audibly to Madame de Guemenée at her side:

"Then has Monsieur de Chabot been made King of Poland?"

The Queen, overhearing this remark, rejoiced inwardly at this little outburst of pride. In order that the good seed might flourish, she affected to pay the profoundest attention to the conversation which followed, and which she encouraged by every means within her power.

The Princess de Guemenée exclaimed:

"Is that the marriage talked of for her? Will nothing dissuade her from such a match? Mademoiselle de Rohan, so proud as she has always been, with her refusals of the Comte de Soissons, the Duc de Weimar and the Duc de Nemours—and now to marry a private gentleman? The pity of it! What are we coming to? Such a marriage is bound to end in nothing but disaster."

To which Mazarin added in his most equivocal tone:

"Can such a thing be true? A real love in the precincts of the Court? Sheer disinterested devotion? Will wonders never cease?"

The Queen, meanwhile, continued to open and shut the case containing the diamond coronet.

"These diamonds would not really suit anybody who was not dark," said she. "Come, Marie, give me your forehead——"

"Do they not suit her to perfection?" she asked.

“ Why indeed,” said the Cardinal, “ they might have been expressly made for Madame la Princesse.”

“ I would give the last drop of blood in my body not to have them taken off again,” said the Prince Palatine.

And on Marie’s face, despite the tears that had coursed down her cheeks so recently, a smile dawned, the involuntary smile of a child, like the sunshine across the rain ; and then, all of a sudden, she flushed up to the roots of her hair, and fled to her apartments next door.

Everyone laughed. The Queen smilingly followed her with her eyes, and then, extending her hand for the Polish Ambassador to kiss, she withdrew to write a letter.

CHAPTER XI

WORK

ONE evening, at Perpignan, towards ten o’clock, untoward events were happening. The camp was sleeping. The interminable siege still dragged along, with no visible results, so far, but the complete enervation of both citizens and soldiers. The enemy’s communications with Catalonia remained unhampered, and the French occupied little more of their attention than in times of peace. Meanwhile the morale of the French army was visibly deteriorating through the spirit of secret uneasiness that always precedes great events. Everything was perfectly calm as far as outward appearance went. The only sound to be heard was the measured tread of the sentinels, and the only visible light the small red tinge of their muskets. Suddenly the trumpets of the Musketeers and Guards rang out : “ Boot, saddle and to horse.” The sentinels called out their cry to arms, and sergeants could be seen with lighted torches, hurrying from tent to tent, with long pikes in their hands, to wake the soldiers and fall them in. The scurrying of booted men was heard, together with the noise of horses’ hoofs,

denoting the preparations of the cavalry. At the end of half-an-hour of tumult silence reigned once more. The lights were extinguished and all was calm. The army waited in readiness.

At one end of the camp a tent could be seen, like a small white pyramid, radiating its beams of light into the outer darkness like a star. Thrown on to the canvas in sharp relief were the perambulating shadows of two men. A number of men on horseback were drawn up outside the tent, awaiting its two occupants—de Thou and Cinq-Mars.

At first sight, de Thou, the wise and God-fearing man, up and armed at such an hour as this, might have been taken for a rebel leader. But any such delusion would have been quickly dispelled by a second glance. His looks were sad and stern, and his hatred of the whole proceeding only kept in check by his dogged determination to disregard his own sentiments. From the day that Henri d'Effiat had taken him into confidence, he had seen only too clearly that all remonstrance was useless where such a will was concerned. He had even read between the lines of his friend's admission, and realised something of the nature of his secret betrothal to the Princess Marie, a relationship full of mystery and intrigue, of voluptuous surrender unrestrained, which could not too soon be brought into a more desirable plane by public recognition. He had grasped the impossible position of the young lover, adored by his mistress, and yet compelled to stand aside each day, and listen to the projects of her marriage with another man. The day that Cinq-Mars had shown his hand to de Thou, he had done everything in his power to dissuade him from the Spanish treaty, appealing to his memories of the past, as well as to his better nature, with no apparent result but that of strengthening his purpose. Cinq-Mars had clung savagely to the idea of his conspiracy, with the one harsh query: "Have I ever asked for your connivance?" and de Thou had ended by giving him his pledge of secrecy, while summoning all his strength of mind to add thereto:

"Expect nothing more from me whatever, if you sign this compact." And yet the compact had been signed by Cinq-Mars, and there was de Thou at his side.

His attitude towards his friend's schemes had maybe softened a little through their frequent discussion ; also his contempt for the Cardinal Duke and all his vices ; his indignation at the servitude of the Parliament, so closely bound up with his own family history ; the utter corruption of all forms of justice ; the powerful names ; and, above all, the noble character of the men directing the enterprise—all these things together combined to modify his first impressions. Having once promised to keep faith with Cinq-Mars, he considered himself justified in receiving further confidences ; and since chance had willed to compromise him together with the conspirators, at the house of Marion Delorme, he regarded himself as bound to them by honour, and pledged to silence. Since then, he had visited Monsieur the Duc de Bouillon and Fontrailles ; they had spoken before him without restraint, and he had listened to them with an open mind. At the present moment the very dangers that his friend incurred had acted like a magnet to draw him to his side. His conscience never ceased to torment him, and yet he followed Cinq-Mars wherever he went, refraining from uttering one phrase which might be interpreted as fears for his personal safety. It was a tacit surrender on his part, and he would have considered it as unworthy of either of them for him to draw back now.

The Master of the Horse was armed for the fray—cuirass, sword, high riding boots and all. An enormous pistol was lying on the table, between two torches, and before the pistol was a watch, in a heavy leather case. De Thou stood motionless, with folded arms, wrapped in his black cloak. Cinq-Mars paced up and down, his hands behind his back, glancing impatiently now and again at the ticking watch ; after which he drew back the flap of his tent and looked out.

"I no longer see my lucky star shining," said he, as

he came back. "Never mind! It shines within my heart!"

"It is a dark night," said de Thou.

"If only the time would go quicker. But it is drawing near, de Thou; drawing very near. Twenty minutes more and it will have begun. The army is to await the signal of a pistol shot."

De Thou was holding an ivory crucifix in his hands, at which he gazed, then raised his eyes to Heaven.

"It is the hour," said he, "of sacrifice. I repent nothing, but none the less the cup of sin is bitter to my lips. I had vowed my days to peace, and the adventures of the mind, yet here I stand, committed to violence, and about to draw my sword—for what?" And here he seized Cinq-Mars roughly by the hand. "For you," he cried; "for you alone I do this thing. My guilt shall vanish from my sight, should it but lead to your glory and happiness. If you should find my thoughts turn back again, however briefly, to their old familiar channels, I beg for your forgiveness."

For a long time Cinq-Mars gazed at him, and a tear could be seen slowly rolling down his cheek.

"My best of friends," cried he at length, "please God, the penalty for all your faults may light on me alone! If may be He will pardon us, as those that have loved much. For both of us are criminals. You through friendship—I through love."

Suddenly his glance fell once more upon the watch, and he seized the heavy pistol in his hands, and watched the tinder glowing with a wild look on his face. His long hair fell around him like the mane of a young lion.

"Burn on," he cried excitedly, "burn on; but take your time! For you are about to light a fire which all the waters of the ocean will not put out. From you a flame shall issue that will light up half the world, and lick the wooden steps of thrones. Burn slowly, most precious flame, for the winds which fan you are mighty and most potent—love and hate. Keep silence while you may, for the noise of your explosion is about to rend the world,

and its echoes will resound about the poor man's cottage, and the palaces of Kings. Burn on, oh feeble flame, burn on ; for me you are the sceptre and the thunder-bolt ! ”

But de Thou, still holding the little ivory crucifix, was murmuring words of another kind :

“ Father, forgive us for the blood that we shall shed. For we fight against things evil and unclean.”

And then, raising his voice :

“ The cause of virtue will triumph. That, and that alone. God has seen fit that this perfidious treaty should not be delivered into our hands, and with that the criminal stain on this enterprise has been removed. We fight without the aid of foreigners, and it may be that we will not even need to fight. God may yet change our Monarch's heart.”

“ The hour has come ! The hour has come ! ” cried Cinq-Mars, gazing at the clock in a sort of frenzied joy. “ A few minutes from now, and this camp will not contain a single Cardinal's man. We are about to march on Narbonne—and HE is there. Give me the pistol.”

With these words he brusquely tore open the flap of his tent, pistol in hand.

“ A messenger from Paris. News from the Court ! ” cried a voice from outside.

And a man, half dead with fatigue, dropped from his horse outside Cinq-Mars's tent, and handed him a small note.

“ From the Queen, monseigneur,” said he.

Cinq-Mars, with a pale face, opened the letter and read :

“ MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS DE CINQ-MARS,

“ This letter is to beg and implore you to use your influence with our beloved adopted daughter and friend, Marie de Gonzague, and to turn her feet into the path of duty, towards the Kingdom of Poland. You, and your affection are the only obstacle within her way. I have sounded her mind. She is still very young, and I have reason to believe that she would *probably find it less distasteful to accept the Polish crown than you imagine.*

"For her sake you have embarked on a war which will devastate my lovely land of France with fire and with blood. I beseech you, as you are a gentleman, to perform a noble act, and release the Duchess of Mantua from any promises she may have made to you. And thereby you may restore peace to her soul as well as to our beloved country.

"Your Queen implores you on her knees to grant this supplication.

"ANNE."

Cinq-Mars calmly laid the pistol down again upon the table. His first impulse had been to turn the loaded muzzle against his breast, but this he mastered, and picking up a pencil, wrote on the back of the same piece of paper :

"MADAME,

"Marie of Gonzaga, being my wife, can never be Queen of Poland until I die. I am about to die.

"CINQ-MARS."

This he thrust into the messenger's hand, as though anxious at all costs to avoid reflection for a single instant, crying as he did so in a furious voice :

"To horse ! To horse ! Delay but a moment and you are a dead man."

Having seen him mount and ride off, he returned into the tent. There he stood, alone with his friend, erect, but pale as death, gazing with the fixed stare of a madman. Suddenly everything seemed to swim before him.

"De Thou !" he cried.

"What is it, dear boy ? I am here, near you. Your hour of triumph is about to strike."

"De Thou !" The voice ran out again, choking, and his friend fell prostrate at his feet, like a tree torn up by the roots.

Tremendous storms will bear different aspects, according to the climate in which they arise. The blizzards of the North will terrify through sheer extent of range, while in the region of the tropics, one single cloud will

gather force, contrasting with the azure of the sky around, while the waves below, tinged with the blood of man, continue to reflect the blue of heaven. So it is with great passions and the forms they take according to the minds they master. Terrible indeed are the tempests that arise within the souls of men accustomed hitherto to subject the force of their desires to conventional restraint. Let youth once meet despair, and no man can predict what disaster will ensue, or, for that matter, what suddenness of resignation. Impossible to foresee if the volcano will burst its way through the mountain or suddenly subside within its inmost depths.

The horrified de Thou now raised his friend to his feet. A stream of blood came trickling from his ears and nose, and his friend would have believed him dead, were it not for the tears still flowing from his eyes. But suddenly the boy raised his head and looked around, gathering his wits together with a force of will that seemed incredible.

"I am in the presence of men," said he, "and must play out my part to the end. De Thou, it is half-past eleven. The hour for the signal has gone by. Take my place, and order the men back again to their quarters. Tell them it has been a false alarm, and that I will explain later."

De Thou, realising the urgency of the command, went out at once to execute it. On his return to the tent he found Cinq-Mars calmly seated, and trying to remove the traces of blood from his face.

"De Thou," said he, looking firmly at his friend, "please leave me now. You are in the way."

"I shall not leave you," replied his friend.

"Fly, I tell you. You must. The Pyrenees are within your reach. I cannot talk much more, even for your sake, but I warn you that if you stay here with me it will mean your death!"

"I shall not leave you," repeated de Thou.

"Then may God protect you," said Cinq-Mars, "for I cannot. The moment has passed. I shall leave you

here. Send for Fontrailles and the rest of the conspirators, give them these passports, and tell them to fly immediately. Tell them that everything has failed and thank them from me. And once again I implore you to go with them. At all costs, and whatever happens, you must not follow me. And I swear to you I am not about to take my own life."

With these words Cinq-Mars wrung his friend by the hand without looking at him, and abruptly left the tent.

At Narbonne, meanwhile, other scenes were being enacted. In the very same room where we formerly discovered Richelieu regulating affairs of State with Joseph's assistance, the very same men might now have been seen in conference. To all intents and purposes their appearance had scarcely altered, though Richelieu had somewhat aged with his three more years of suffering, and the monk seemed to be in a state of apprehension only equalled by the calmness of his master.

The Cardinal, lying back in his long chair, his legs wrapped around with warm fur coverings, was nursing three kittens on his lap. They frisked and scuffled on his long red robe, and now and again he would pick one of them up and drop it down upon the rest, to prolong the tussle ; then he would look at them and laugh. At his feet was stretched the mother, like an enormous furry muff.

Joseph, seated at his side, related all that he had heard within the church at the confessional, frequently paling at his own risk of discovery, and the danger he had escaped at the hands of Jacques.

"And finally, Monseigneur," he concluded, "I am bound to admit I am greatly perturbed at the thought of the perils which Your Highness has incurred and still incurs. Assassins hold themselves in readiness to murder you. In France I see the entire Court opposing you, together with half the army and two provinces. Abroad, Spain and Austria are both ready to furnish troops against you. Wherever I look, I seem to discover nothing but intrigue, fighting and weapons of war and murder."

The Cardinal yawned three times, without pausing in his game, and said :

“ What a beautiful beast a cat is ! A little tiger of the boudoir, compact of grace and cunning ! Look at that tiny yellow creature pretending to be asleep, so that his little striped brother shall not notice him—and suddenly—down he pounces on his back ! See how the other claws him ! What weapons of attack ! If he were only stronger he would kill him first, then eat him up ! A pleasure to watch, these pretty little beasts—— ”

He coughed, and after a fit of sneezing, went on again :

“ Messire Joseph, you have been already instructed not to discuss business with me until I have supped. I am hungry now, but it is not yet time. My doctor, Chicot, insists on my regular meals, and I soon pay the penalty of disobedience to his orders. This is how my evening is mapped out,” he went on, glancing at the clock. At nine o'clock we will settle the affair of Monsieur le Grand ; at ten I shall be carried around the garden to enjoy some fresh air in the light of the moon ; after that I shall sleep for one hour or perhaps two ; at midnight the King will arrive, and at four o'clock you will report here again to take my various orders of arrest and condemnation which I will deliver you for Paris, the country and the army.”

Richelieu spoke in his accustomed monotone, the timbre of his voice being only slightly weakened by the ill condition of his chest, and the loss of one or two teeth.

It was seven o'clock in the evening and the monk now withdrew. The Cardinal ate his supper with the utmost deliberation, and when the clock struck half-past eight, Joseph once more made his appearance, and seated himself close by the table. The Cardinal addressed him thus :

“ And this is all they have been able to achieve against me during the past two years and more ! A miserable lot of people, on my soul ! Even the Duc de Bouillon,

whom I regarded as an able man, has now fallen in my estimation through this affair. I have watched his actions closely, and now, ask yourself, has he taken one single step worthy of a capable statesman? The King, and Monsieur, and all the rest of them, have done nothing but put their heads together to conspire against me, and have not succeeded in robbing me of a single man. That little fellow, Cinq-Mars, is the only one of them all who has any continuity in his ideas; he has carried out his side of it in a manner quite surprising. To do him justice, the boy has something in him; had he not been so obstinate in disposition I would have made him my pupil; but he has seen fit to break a lance with me, and I am sorry for him accordingly. For two years now I have given them all quite enough rope to play with; and now we will proceed to hang them in it."

"It is high time, Monseigneur," remarked Joseph. "It is but a little distance between here and Perpignan. Do you realise that though you may have a strong army around you here, the troops in the camp are restless and unreliable, that all these young nobles are in a state of fury, and that the King himself is far from trustworthy?"

The Cardinal looked at the clock.

"It is still only half-past eight, Monsieur Joseph, and I have already told you that I do not discuss that particular affair until nine. Meanwhile, in the interests of justice, you will take down what I am going to dictate to you, for my memory still serves me well. I see by my notes that four judges of Urbain Grandier are still alive. Now Urbain Grandier was a man of considerable genius." These words were stressed with deliberate malice, and Joseph bit his lips at them. "All his other judges have met with an unhappy end. There is Houmain, but he will end on the gallows as a smuggler, so we need not worry about him. Now we come to that detestable man Lactance, who lives at peace with Barré and Mignon. Take your pen, and write to Monseigneur de Poitiers:

“ MONSEIGNEUR,

“ It is His Majesty’s good pleasure that the holy fathers Barré and Mignon be superseded in their benefices, and sent, with the least possible delay, to the town of Lyons, together with Father Lactance, capucin, there to appear before a special tribunal, as being privy to certain criminal intentions against the State.”

Joseph wrote this down with about as much emotion as a Turkish slave, slicing off a head at a gesture from his master.

The Cardinal signed the letter, and then added :

“ I will inform you of the manner in which I would dispose of them, for it is important that all traces of this old case shall be completely effaced. Providence has seen fit to remove the men connected with it, and I am but the humble instrument. That is all that posterity will need to know.”

And he then read through to the monk that page of his memoirs in which the spells and evil possession of the magician are exhaustively dealt with. Joseph could not refrain from glancing at the clock more than once.

“ I see you are longing to come to the case of Monsieur le Grand,” said the Cardinal at length. “ Very good ; to please you, we will deal with it now. You seem to think that I have cause for uneasiness ? You think I have allowed these unfortunate conspirators to go too far ? On the contrary, here are one or two papers which would reassure you did you but know their contents. First of all, within this wooden cylinder, is the Spanish treaty, obtained at Oloron. I am very pleased with Laubardemont. He is an able man ! ”

Beneath Joseph’s bushy brows two eyes were burning with vindictive jealousy. “ Ah, Monseigneur,” he broke in, “ as yet you know nothing of the man from whom he took it. True, Laubardemont saw to his death, and may well get the credit for it, but all the same he was concerned in the conspiracy. That man was his son.”

“ Is that the truth ? ” demanded the Cardinal severely.

"Of course, it must be, since you would not dare to lie to me. How did you find it out?"

"By the people in his employ, Monseigneur. Here are their reports. They will all appear as witnesses."

The Cardinal examined the papers and then replied:

"We must use him first of all in the Conspiracy Trial. After that you can do what you like with him. I give him to you."

Joseph gathered up his precious papers in the seventh heaven of delight, and continued:

"Your Eminence talks of trying these men who are already armed and on horseback?"

"Not all of them. Read this letter from Monsieur to Chavigny. He implores forgiveness. He has had enough of it. He has not even dared to address me directly, but contents himself with clinging to the knees of one of my supporters. But the next day he thought better of it, and wrote me a personal letter, together with another to the King. His scheme was choking him. He could not keep it to himself. But I am not to be pacified quite so easily as that; either he will give me a detailed confession, or he shall be hounded from the country. And so I wrote to him this morning. As for the magnificent and all-powerful Duc de Bouillon, the hero of Sedan and General-in-Chief of the Italian Army, he has just been seized by his own officers, who discovered him hiding in a bundle of hay. Nothing remains but these two young men at our elbow. They are under the impression that the whole army is at their disposal, whereas in reality the Red Guard are their sole supporters. The others will declare for Monsieur, and remain inactive. My soldiers will arrest them. I have, none the less, allowed them to make a show of their obedience to Cinq-Mars. If the two rebels give the signal at half-past eleven this evening, they will at once be arrested. If they do not, the King will deliver them up to me before the night is over. No need to open your eyes at me like that. I tell you that the King will hand them over to me shortly after midnight. You see, Joseph, how

everything has been carried out without any help from you. We have arranged everything as we thought fit, and I am puzzled to discover any use you may have been in the affair. In fact, I cannot help remarking on your negligence."

"Ah, Monseigneur, if you only knew the difficulty I had in discovering the secret of this treaty! It was as much as my life was worth, facing those two young people!"

Here the Cardinal was pleased to utter a mocking laugh from the depths of his arm-chair.

"You must have been incredibly ridiculous, as well as terrified, in that confession box, Joseph," said he, "and I dare swear it was the first time in your life you encountered such a thing as love. Did you like the language, Joseph? And what is more, did you understand it? Somehow, I do not seem to see it having much appeal to you."

Richelieu folded his arms and regarded his bewildered servant with an air of the utmost satisfaction, continuing to adopt the flippant tone of a great lord, which sometimes it was his pleasure to make use of when it amused him to make a mock of holy things.

"Come now, Joseph, suppose you were to give me a definition of love from your point of view? What do you make of it? For you have now seen for yourself that it exists outside the story books. If it were not for love, this young man would never have tangled himself up in this conspiracy. You heard him say as much, with those profane ears of yours. What is this love? As far as I am concerned it is a sealed book."

At this Joseph was thrown quite off his balance and continued to gaze downwards at the floor with the vacant eye of one of the lower animals. After pondering the matter at some length, he made answer in his harsh, drawling voice:

"I should define love as a certain kind of virulent fever that undermines the brain. But, of a truth, Monseigneur, I have never bestowed any thought upon

the subject up to this moment, and I have always been ill at ease when speaking to a woman. In fact I have many times found it in my heart to wish that Society could abolish the sex altogether, since I fail to see they serve any useful purpose, save those with a genius for extorting confidences, such as the little Duchess, or Marion de Lorme, whom I cannot recommend sufficiently to Your Eminence. She has left no stone unturned in dealing with this conspiracy, and even the gift of prophecy has been pressed into her service. Heaven is on our side it seems against these rebels, and all you have to do is to choose the window through which you will pass on the day of their execution.”*

“Enough of this tom-foolery, monsieur,” was the Cardinal’s reply. “Did I but give you the opportunity you would soon make me as ridiculous as you are yourself. Please confine your energies to the people whom I deliver into your hands. I have already given you your instructions. As soon as the Master of the Horse is taken, you will have him tried and executed at Lyons. I wish to have no more to do with such a trifling matter. It is nothing but the smallest pebble beneath my feet, and already it has taken up too much of my time.”

Joseph was speechless. He could not understand this man who, surrounded by armed foes, spoke of the future as though it were the present, and of the present as though it were the past—no longer to be feared. He did not know whether to regard him as a mad-man or a prophet—as inferior or superior to the human race.

His surprise increased a thousandfold when Chavigny rushed into the room, stumbling against the Cardinal’s stool, and almost precipitating himself against his feet in his haste, crying as he did so :

“Monseigneur, one of your men has arrived from Perpignan, where he has witnessed the whole camp in a ferment, and your enemies mounted and armed——”

“They will soon be unmounted, monsieur,” replied

* See p. 269,

Richelieu, readjusting his stool as he spoke. "You seem somewhat perturbed?"

"But, Monseigneur, ought we not to inform M. de Fabert?"

"Leave him in peace and go to bed yourself, as well as Joseph, too."

"Monseigneur, something else has happened. Something extraordinary. The King is coming here."

"Truly, that is rather extraordinary," said the Minister, with a glance at the clock, "for I was not expecting him for another two hours. Leave me, both of you."

Almost the next moment, the tramp of feet and the clash of weapons announced the monarch's arrival. The folding doors were thrown open; the Cardinal's guards smote on the floor three times with their pikes, and the King appeared.

He walked with the aid of a Malacca cane in one hand, and on the other was supported by his Father Confessor, Father Sirmond, who withdrew, leaving him alone with the Cardinal. The latter had risen with the utmost effort, and now stood before the King, unable to move a step, by reason of the long coverings wrapped around his crippled limbs. He made a gesture, as though to assist Louis to his seat in front of him, near to the fire. The King sank into a large arm-chair filled with cushions, and asked for the strengthening draught always prepared for him as a protection against the fainting fits that had now become so frequent. This he drank, and having dismissed his retainers with a gesture, turned to Richelieu and addressed him with lowered voice:

"I am on my way, my dear Cardinal—I realise I am on my way to meet my Maker, for every day finds me a little weaker, and neither the summer nor the southern climate have been able to give me back my strength again."

"I shall be there before Your Majesty," replied the Minister. "Death has already laid his hand upon my lower limbs, as you observe. But I am still your faithful

servant so long as a head remains for me to think with."

"And I am sure you meant to add, 'A heart to love me with,'" replied the King.

"Can Your Majesty doubt it?" asked the Cardinal, frowning and biting his lip with sheer impatience at a beginning of this sort.

"Sometimes I do," replied the King. "Come. It is my wish to speak with you quite openly and make my complaints to you in person. For three years now there are certain things for which I have borne you a grudge. You and I have never discussed them, but none the less they rankled in my mind, and nothing but their recollection could have made me subscribe to any opinions detrimental to your interests."

This was just that kind of frankness so dear to all weak characters anxious to escape all blame and arouse their enemy's apprehension of the evil they never quite dare execute, while sheltering themselves behind a childish argument, founded on anger at their own subjection. Richelieu fully realised from these words the danger he had run. But, realising also the value of "confession" in extracting anger by the root, he played dexterously with the subject of his Sovereign's wrath, using every protestation which, in his opinion, would help to fan the flames of anger, and facilitate self-revelation.

"No, no, no!" cried the Monarch at last. "Not one word shall I believe of all you say, until you can explain to my satisfaction two circumstances past all forgetting, and, in my belief, beyond a shadow of excuse. They dwell for ever in my mind—the trial of Urbain Grandier, about which I have been so shamefully misled; and the hatred born by you towards my unhappy mother, and which you have extended even to her mortal remains."

"Is that all, Sire?" asked Richelieu. "Are those, indeed, my only faults? They are easily explained. The first affair I thought good to withhold from Your

Majesty's notice on account of all its horrible and scandalous details. There is a certain term, ' Magic '—a term not altogether without justification—used to designate a class of crime for which modesty has no name, the recital of which would have gone far to corrupt the most innocent of minds. There is also a justifiable method of concealing from the sight of the populace things of a kind which—— ”

“ Enough, enough, Cardinal,” said Louis, hastily turning away his head and lowering his eyes with a blush. “ I desire to hear no further details. As you know, I find these matters extremely distasteful. That being the case, I approve your motive. The matter was not put before me in that aspect, and these terrible vices were never whispered in my presence. You are quite satisfied as to proofs of these crimes ? ”

“ I have them all within my possession, Sire. As to the glorious Queen Marie de Medicis, I am amazed that Your Majesty should overlook my attachment to her. I am not afraid of admitting that it is to her I owe my exalted position ; it was she who deigned in the first place to summon into her presence the young Bishop of Lucon, aged in those days twenty-two years ! Imagine my sufferings in being forced to oppose her in the interests of Your Majesty ! But as this sacrifice was made in your service, I have never regretted it, nor do I intend to do so now.”

“ Perhaps not. But I have,” said the King grimly.

“ But, Sire,” cried the Cardinal, “ the Son of God Himself has left you His example in this respect, and it is surely in accordance with His life that we try to regulate our thoughts. If a fitting monument has not yet been raised to the precious memory of your mother, believe me, it is only from fear of the grief it might cause you to recall her loss. That is why the matter is so far in abeyance. But I for one shall bless the day on which I am allowed to discuss it with you. I myself shall officiate at the first Mass at Saint Denis, when once your mother's body is laid to rest within its walls—

that is to say, if Providence shall spare me till that blessed moment comes."

The King's expression, although still cold, now became slightly less resentful, and the Cardinal, believing he had exerted his powers of persuasion sufficiently for one night, suddenly resolved on a direct attack by way of diversion. He spoke coldly, and without removing his eyes from the King's face :

"Are those the reasons that caused you to compass my death?"

"I?" said the King. "You are misinformed. I heard some talk of a conspiracy, and I wished to talk the matter over with you, but I myself have done nothing against your person."

"That does not coincide with the reports of the conspirators, Sire. But, of course, I am bound to believe Your Majesty, and I am only too happy to hear that my information is false. What is this information you are good enough to impart to me?"

"I—I wanted—I thought it best to warn you in confidence against Monsieur——"

"Why, Sire, I can hardly believe that to be necessary now, for I have here a letter from him to you in which he confesses his own guilt towards Your Majesty."

The King, much astonished, took the letter and read :

"MONSEIGNEUR,

"My lack of faith towards Your Majesty has filled me with despair. With all the humility that is in me, I implore Your Majesty to accept a thousand pardons on my part, together with the assurance of my complete repentance and submission. Your very humble subject,

"GASTON."

"But what does all this mean?" cried the King. "Have they actually dared to take arms against me too?"

"*Me too!*" muttered the Cardinal to himself. And he bit his lips, and then continued :

"You too, Sire, believe me. In so far as I am able

to judge by a certain small roll of paper," and he drew from the little hollow tube of elder wood a piece of parchment which he unrolled before his Sovereign.

"This, to all intents and purposes, is a treaty with Spain, which I need hardly say is devoid of Your Majesty's signature. It consists of twenty points, arranged in perfect order. Nothing has been forgotten—the place of retreat, the number of troops, assistance forthcoming in men and money——"

"Traitors!" exclaimed Louis, in a tremendous state of excitement. "They must be seized immediately! My brother has repented and withdrawn, but the Duc de Bouillon must be arrested without delay——"

"Yes, Sire."

"That will present difficulties in the midst of his Italian army."

"I will answer for his capture with my life, Sire. But surely there is yet another name?"

"Which — what — Cinq-Mars?" stammered the King.

"Exactly, Sire," replied the Cardinal.

"I have seen it—yes—but I thought—perhaps——"

"Listen to me," said Richelieu, all at once, in a voice of thunder. "This affair must be finished with once for all to-night. Your favourite is in arms at the head of his supporters. Choose now between him and me. Sacrifice the man for the boy, or the boy for the man. There is no other way."

"And if I declare for you, what are your terms?" asked the King.

"His head, and that of his most intimate friend."

"Never! Impossible!" exclaimed Louis, completely horrified. He was now a prey to the same irresolution as with which he had met Cinq-Mars's propositions against Richelieu. "He is my friend, just as you are. His death would cut me to the heart. Why cannot you two men agree? Why must there be this perpetual discord between you? That is what has driven me to such lengths as these. You and he between

you are driving me into despair, and making my whole life one long misery."

As Louis spoke, he buried his face in his hands, no doubt wishing to conceal the fact that he was weeping. But the pitiless Minister continued to pierce him with his gaze, much as the hawk will contemplate his prey, and, without granting him one moment's respite, profited by his victim's agitation to drive his reasons home.

"Is this the way," he said, in a tone of icy severity, "that you recall the commandments of God Himself, delivered through the mouth of your confessor? You, yourself, once informed me how the Church had expressly ordained that all reports unfavourable to me should reach my notice, and here is an attempt on my very life, known to you, of which you never said one word. It was left to more loyal friends than you to inform me of the conspiracy. Providence has ordained that the delinquents themselves have surrendered and confessed their guilt. All but one—and he the most hardened and least important sinner of them all. He it is who has borne down all before him, who has delivered France into the hands of foreigners, who undoes on one single day the result of twenty years' hard strivings, stirs up the Huguenots to revolt, calls out all orders of the State to arms, resuscitates old worn-out claims, and once again illuminates those fires extinguished by your father's efforts! For—and on this point you shall not deceive yourself—that is the situation with which you are faced at this moment. Are you ready to deal with it? What counter stroke have you prepared to meet it with?"

The King, now completely overwhelmed, made no reply, but continued to sit with his head bowed in his hands. The inexorable Cardinal folded his arms and continued:

"I fear you should imagine it is on my own account I speak. But do you really suppose my adversary means as much to me as that? Of a truth, I know not why I do not permit you to place this heavy load of power within this stripling's hands. Do you imagine that, living within your Court as I have done for the past

twenty years, I have not ensured myself a place of refuge whither no-one can prevent me from retiring, there to spend the six short months of life which are probably all that I have left to live? From that isolated haven I should watch you reigning from afar; and a very instructive spectacle it would be! What, for example, would you say to all those little princelings who would leap to their feet the moment my weight no longer crushed them down, trailing along in the wake of your brother, and saying, as they said to Henri IV. on his throne: 'Give us back the right once more to govern the lands that belong to us, and we will trouble you no more'? You would do it, I have not the slightest doubt, and indeed it would be the least recognition you could bestow upon your rescuers from that tyrant Richelieu. And it might, after all, be the happier way, for left with nothing but the Ile de France* to govern, my successor would be relieved from the necessity of dealing with a multitude of papers—such as this!"

And, as he spoke, the Cardinal gave an angry push to the table before him, littered with documents and portfolios innumerable.

The audacity of this speech roused Louis from his apathy of meditation. He raised his head, and for one brief moment almost seemed to have adopted a resolution from very fear lest another one should take its place.

"My answer to you, monsieur," said he, "is simply this: From henceforth I desire to be left to reign alone."

"A most praiseworthy desire," replied Richelieu, "though I warn you beforehand that the present state of affairs is far from easy. This is the hour that my working day usually commences."

"Then I will take your place," answered Louis. "I will deal with the various portfolios, and give the necessary instructions."

"Try it," quoth Richelieu. "I will withdraw. And if you are in any difficulty, I am always to be summoned."

* At one time the whole of the royal domain, including Valois, Beauvais, the Vexis, the region of Paris, and part of the county of Soissons.

Whereupon he rang a bell and almost simultaneously four lackeys appeared, large strong men, who picked up the chair containing the Cardinal, and bore him off to another apartment. For, as we have already said, he was far too crippled to walk. In passing through the room where the secretaries were at work, Richelieu cried in a loud voice :

“ All orders to be taken from His Majesty the King.”

The King remained alone. Strengthened by his recent resolution, and elated by the feeling of resistance so rare with him, he was eager to start on his political pre-occupations without delay. Walking round the enormous table, he discovered it to be laden with as many portfolios as the boundary lines of Europe, with all its Kingdoms and Principalities. One of these he opened, and found it divided up into sections, corresponding with the number of provinces of the country for which it was destined. Everything was arranged in order, but order of a kind that appalled him, each note containing but the synopsis of the matter in hand, and bearing upon the immediate relationships of that country with France. The brevity of these notes was almost as hard for Louis to understand as were the letters in cypher, littered about the table. There they lay, in a confused heap ; edicts concerning banishment and expropriation of the Huguenots of La Rochelle, together with treaties signed with Gustaphus Adolphus and the Huguenots of the North against the Empire ; notes on General Bannier, on Walstein, on the Duc de Weimar and Jean de Wert were jumbled together with details of letters found in a private casket of the Queen's, together with a list of the necklaces and jewelry contained therein, and the double interpretation of each of the phrases used by her. On the margin of one of the letters appeared the words : “ Four lines of a man's handwriting ; sufficient material for a criminal case against her.” Further down were to be found denunciations against the Huguenots, with the plans of their abortive republic ; a proposed division of France into Provinces, each to be ruled by an annually-

elected Governor ; and last, but not least, a list of the Cardinals nominated by the Pope the same day as Richelieu himself, then Bishop of Lucon. Amongst them was included the Marquis de Bedemar, ambassador and conspirator at Venice.

Louis racked his brains in vain over these details of a time gone by, searching vainly for the papers relative to the conspiracy and all its entanglements, especially in so far as they concerned himself. Suddenly a little figure appeared within the room. It was Desnoyers, one of the State secretaries, a little olive-skinned man, with rounded shoulders and subservient gait. He stood, bowing before the King.

" May I speak to Your Majesty concerning Portuguese affairs ? " he enquired.

" And I suppose you mean Spanish affairs as well ? " replied Louis, " Portugal being a province of Spain."

" Only Portugal," insisted Desnoyers ; " here is their manifesto, just received." And he read aloud :

" Don Juan, by the grace of God, King of Portugal, as of the Kingdom of Africa, lord of Guinea, and by right of conquest, discovery and commerce, of Ethiopia, Arabia Persia and the Indies. . . ."

" What is all this about ? " interrupted the King " Who is addressing us in this manner ? "

" The Duc de Braganza, King of Portugal, crowned—crowned—oh, crowned some little ago, Sire, by a man named Pinto. And no sooner is he on the throne, than he extends a helping hand to Catalonia, in revolt."

" Catalonia in revolt ? Then has King Philip IV. no longer the Comte-Duc for his Minister ? "

" On the contrary, Sire, he has him still, and therein lies the reason. Here is the declaration of the Estates General of the Catalonians to His Catholic Majesty, announcing the rise of the entire country against his troops, ' sacriligious and excommunicate.' . . . The King of Portugal. . . ."

"Say rather the Duc de Bragance," said the King. "I know nothing of this revolt."

"The Duc de Bragance, then, Sire," continued the imperturbable official, "has sent his nephew, Don Ignace de Mascarenas, to the Province of Catalonia, to seize the protectorship of that country—and presumably the crown too, which he will then add to his recent conquests. Now, Your Majesty's troops are before Perpignan."

"What has that got to do with it?" asked Louis.

"The Catalonians are more French at heart than Portugese, Sire, and there is still time to end this protectorship of the King—of the Duc de Portugal."

"But that would be assisting the rebels! You would dare?"

"It was His Eminence's plan," continued the secretary. "The alternative is war between Spain and France, and Monsieur d'Olivares has not hesitated to hold out the hand of His Catholic Majesty towards our Huguenots."

"Very good. I will think it over," said the King. "Leave me."

"But, Sire, the Catalonians are pressing for their answer. Troops from Arragon are marching against them."

"We will see. I will decide in a quarter-of-an-hour from now," replied Louis XIII.

The little secretary retired, depressed and discomfited. He was succeeded by Chavigny, carrying a portfolio under his arm, stamped with the arms of Britain.

"Sire," said he, "I must request Your Majesty's instructions concerning England. The Parliamentary troops, under Essex, have just raised the siege of Gloucester; Prince Rupert has fought a disastrous battle near Newbury, from which the English King has derived but small advantage. Parliament is prolonged, and all the large towns, all the sea-ports, and all the Presbyterian population declare in its favour. Charles the First is asking you for the help his Queen can no longer find in Holland."

"We must send troops to help my brother of England," said Louis.

But wishing first to see the previous papers on the subject, he found that the Cardinal had written across a former demand from the English King: "A matter for patient waiting and consideration. The Commons are strong. Charles is counting on the Scotch. They will sell him." "Great care is required. They have a soldier in their midst who came to see Vincennes and is reported to have said: 'No blow should be aimed at a Prince unless it be mortal.'" To which the Cardinal had added: "Remarkable," and then, having scratched out that expression, had substituted: "*A matter for fear.*"

Lower down he had written: "This man rules Fairfax. He claims to be inspired. He will be a great leader. Refuse help. Money thrown away."

Whereupon the King said:

"No, no, let us do nothing in a hurry. I will consider the matter."

"But, Sire," protested Chavigny, "events are developing rapidly. If your messenger is delayed but one hour, it may accelerate the King's ruin by a whole year."

"Is it as bad as that?" asked Louis.

"The Republic is already preached in the Independent Camp, Bible in hand, while the Royalists are pleased to regard the matter with mirth, and dispute with one another for precedence."

"And yet one stroke of good fortune could still save the situation!"

"The Stuarts are never fortunate, Sire," replied Chavigny, in a tone that was full of respect, but none the less gave food for thought.

"Leave me," was the King's only comment. And the tone of his voice was ominous.

The official slowly withdrew.

Then it was that Louis XIII. beheld himself in his entirety, and knew himself for the negation that he was. His eyes wandered over the documents piled up on either

hand, each one containing situations fraught with peril. And still he knew the dangers they contained were nothing to those which might result from his own unaided statesmanship. He rose, and moving a few paces away, bent over a map of Europe. In it he found, North, East, South and West, all his most secret terrors assuming tangible forms, and threatening destruction to his land ; revolutions bursting forth like so many Furies ; each country smouldering on the edge of a volcano ; pitiful appeals from Kings in distress reaching him on all sides, against the dark background of a people's frenzy. Beneath his very feet he felt the crumbling of the soil of France. His feeble vision paled and grew dim. His head swam, and he was seized with dreadful giddiness.

" Richelieu ! " he cried in a choking voice, as he rang the bell. " Send at once for the Cardinal ! " And he staggered, fainting, into an arm-chair.

When the King once more opened his eyes, revived by the strong salts they had rubbed on his lips and his temples, he caught a glimpse of pages retreating rapidly through the doors, and found himself left alone with his Minister. The imperturbable Cardinal had ordered his long chair to be placed by the side of Louis, much as a doctor seats himself by the side of his patient, and not for one moment did he remove his gleaming watchful eyes from the King's pale face. No sooner was the sick man capable of listening, than the terrible dialogue was resumed again by the same sombre voice.

" You sent for me ? " it asked. " What is it you want me to do ? "

Louis turned his head on the cushion, half opened his eyes, glanced at the man in front of him, and shut them again as rapidly. The fleshless countenance, with the two burning eyes and little pointed white beard, his cap and robe the colour of flames and blood—this was no earthly presence, but a spirit come straight from hell.

" Rule France," said he. His voice was little but a whisper.

" Then you deliver Cinq-Mars to me ? And de

Thou ? ” demanded the implacable Minister, stooping near, to probe into the depths of those dull eyes, for all the world like a rapacious heir relentlessly pursuing a dying man’s wishes to the grave.

“ Rule France,” repeated the King, and he turned away his face from him.

“ Sign this ! ” was Richelieu’s only reply. And he held out a paper on which the words were written : “ I desire they shall be taken, alive or dead.”

Louis, with averted head, allowed his hand to fall upon the fatal document, and the deed was done.

“ Leave me, for pity’s sake. I am dying,” said he.

“ But that is not all,” the voice continued. “ I do not trust you. I require pledges and guarantees. Sign this, and I will leave you.”

“ When the King visits the Cardinal, his Guards will remain on duty, together with those of His Majesty. And when the Cardinal pays his respects to the King, he shall also be accompanied by his own Guards.”

Furthermore :

“ His Majesty agrees to place the two Princes his sons as hostage in the hands of the Cardinal, as guarantee of his good faith.”

“ My sons ! ” cried out Louis, lifting up his head.

“ You would dare ? ”

“ Would you prefer me to withdraw again ? ” enquired Richelieu.

The King signed.

“ Is that all ? ” he asked, with a deep groan.

But it was not all. His torment had yet to end.

The door opened abruptly, and Cinq-Mars came in. This time it was the Cardinal’s turn to tremble.

“ What do you want here, monsieur ? ” he asked, with his hand on the bell.

The Master of the Horse was as pallid as the King himself. Without deigning to reply to Richelieu, he

walked calmly up to his Sovereign. The latter gazed at him with the expression of a man who has just received his sentence of death.

"You may find it difficult, Sire, to get me arrested, for I have twenty thousand men on my side," said Henri d'Effiat, in the gentlest of voices.

"Alas, Cinq-Mars!" cried Louis mournfully. "Is it really you that has done these dreadful things?"

"It is, Sire. It is also Cinq-Mars who comes to bring you his sword—for that you will give me up, I know already." Wherewith the young soldier drew out his sword and laid it down at the feet of the King, who gazed at it in silence.

Cinq-Mars smiled sadly, without one trace of bitterness, for he no longer belonged to this world. He threw a disdainful glance at Richelieu as he added:

"I give myself up, as I wish to die. But vanquished I am not."

The Cardinal clenched his fists in wrath. But he controlled himself.

"Who are your accomplices?" he asked. Cinq-Mars looked fixedly at Louis XIII., and half opened his lips to speak. The King bowed his head. At that moment he was suffering a degree of pain mercifully denied to most men.

"I have none," said Cinq-Mars at length, out of pity for his Prince. And he went out of the room.

He passed through the first gallery, where all the Courtiers, including Fabert, rose at the sight of him. Cinq-Mars walked straight up to Fabert with the words:

"Please order these gentlemen to arrest me, monsieur."

They looked at one another without daring to approach him.

"On my word of honour, gentlemen, I am your prisoner, and His Majesty's. See—I have no sword!"

"I am at a loss to understand," said the General. "Here have two of you come to give yourselves up and I have received no orders to arrest a living soul."

"Two of us?" exclaimed Cinq-Mars. "Ah, that

can only be Monsieur de Thou ! Alas ! From his very loyalty I know too well it can be no other man ! ”

“ Then I was right in my surmise ! ” said a familiar voice.

And the next moment Cinq-Mars found himself in the arms of his friend.

CHAPTER XII

THE PRISONERS

AMONGST those old castles which, year by year, France is reluctantly shedding, like the fair petals of a flowery crown, rose one of a wild and gloomy aspect, built on the left bank of the River Saône. Under the name of *Pierre Encise*, it rose like a formidable sentinel, guarding the gates of the town of Lyons. Its name was derived from the colossal pyramid of rock which jutted out over the river—a relic of the days gone by when it was said to have been joined to the rocks on the opposite side, in the form of a natural archway. But time, water and the hand of man had proved too much for it, and nothing now remained but the ancient pile of granite, forming the base of the fortress of which no traces now remain. Built originally by the Archbishops of Lyons, for their residence as Temporal Lords of the city, it had gradually been used for more military purposes, and ultimately, under Louis XIII., was converted into a prison. The building was commanded by one gigantic tower, impervious to the light of day except by means of three long loop-holes ; and the whole was encircled by thick battlemented walls, conforming in their irregularity of outline to the shape of the steep gigantic rock on which they stood.

This was the spot where Cardinal Richelieu, guarding his prey like a miser with a new-found treasure, was pleased to imprison his two youthful foes. It was his

pleasure to conduct them in person, and leaving Louis to return to Paris before him, the Cardinal departed from Narbonne, trailing his captives in his suite, as evidence of his latest triumph, embarking on the Rhône at Tarascon, near the mouth of the river, and thereby prolonging the pleasures of vengeance, which men have been pleased to define as a delight of the gods themselves. No money was spared to enhance this luxury of hate. From the banks of the river might have been seen, floating serenely down the current a gay procession of barges with gilded oars, beflagged with the Cardinal's colours and Cardinal's arms. The Cardinal himself reclined within the first barge, towing his two victims after him in another boat, at the end of a long chain. Towards the end of the day, when the cool of the evening began to be felt, the sheltering canvas would be removed from the deck, revealing Richelieu, pale and emaciated, seated near the stern, while behind him stood the two prisoners, serene and cool, arm linked in arm, as they gazed at the rapid flow of the water beneath them. Time had been, when on those very banks, Cæsar's soldiers might have stood, dimly brooding on the sternest boatman of them all, conducting two ghostly brothers, Castor and Pollux, to the land of shades. But Christian minds, being made of weaker stuff, paused not to ruminate on the spectacle beneath their eyes. To them it was no priest in holy orders leading his foes in person to their death. It was merely the First Minister passing on his way.

And so he finished his journey, bequeathing his victims as prisoners to that very town where they had purported his end. Nothing pleased him better than to flirt in this way with his destiny, leaving his mark upon the spot where Fate had tried to dig his grave.

Here is a description of his progress, as found in a contemporary manuscript of that year :

“ His journey up the river of the Rhône was carried out in a barge, wherein he had built for himself a chamber of wood

hung with velvet tapestries of scarlet flowers on a golden background. In the same barge was an ante-chamber in similar style. A number of guards and soldiers, wearing scarlet surcoats, embroidered with gold, silver and silk, together with many noble lords, were gathered together in the hinder part of the barge, near the stern. His Eminence lay stretched upon a bed, upholstered in purple silk. He was surrounded by other boats, containing Monsiegnur le Cardinal Bigny, and Messieurs the Bishops of Nantes and Chartres, with numerous Abbés and gentlemen of his suite. The Cardinal's barge was preceded by a frigate, to charter the course of the river, followed by a boat full of musketeers, and officers in command. On approaching an island, a body of soldiers would be landed in search of suspected enemies, and their search proving fruitless, they would be stationed on guard round the coast till the first two barges had sailed safely past, the barges themselves being filled with soldiers and gentlemen at arms.

"After this would come His Eminence's barge, with a smaller barge attached to it behind, in which were Messrs. de Thou and Cinq-Mars, guarded by a detachment of King's guards, and twelve of the Cardinal's guards. The last three boats contained a number of gentlemen and soldiers, together with His Eminence's plate and wearing apparel.

"On either bank of the river rode companies of light horsemen, while the Cardinal's arrival was preceded by a magnificent regiment of foot soldiers in every town at which he halted. Through the land of Dauphiné would float the pleasant note of bugles, with answering calls from Vivarais, mingling with sounds of echo from among the rocks, in joyful emulation."

It was a late September night in 1642, and all within the impregnable Prisoner's Tower seemed wrapped in slumber. Suddenly the door of the outer room turned on its hinges without a sound, and on the threshold stood a brown-robed man, girt round his waist with a cord, his feet shod with sandals. In his hand he held a bunch of enormous keys. It was Joseph. Before entering, he stood cautiously gazing into the apartment of the Master of the Horse. The walls were hung around with large and handsome tapestries ; a bed of red damask was made

up ready for use, but the prisoner was not in it ; he was seated in a large arm-chair, close to the high chimney-piece, clad in a long grey robe, priestly fashion. His head was bowed, and in the glimmering lamp-light his eyes were fixed upon a little golden crucifix in such deep meditation that the monk was able to draw near and take up his position opposite the prisoner before attracting his attention. At length he raised his head and cried :

“ Miserable man ! What are you doing here ? ”

“ Young man, you are a slave to passion,” replied the mysterious visitor in a voice scarcely above a whisper. “ Two months’ imprisonment should at least have cured you of that. I am the bearer of important news. Listen to me. I have thought much about you, and by no means hate you as much as you believe. Every moment is precious, and I will not waste my words. Two hours from now you will be first questioned, then judged, then put to death together with your friend. Your fate is inevitable, since it is necessary that the business be completed within one day.”

“ I know it,” replied Cinq-Mars, “ and am reconciled.”

“ Well, I have it in my power to save you, for, as I told you just now, I have given much thought to the matter, and am about to propose a plan which should find favour in your sight. The Cardinal has only six more months to live. Let us be frank, for there is no need for mystery between us two ; you see for yourself to what condition I have brought you in his service, and by that you can judge of the fate I could reserve for him, in yours. Even these last six months need not be his. The King loves you, and would recall you to his side, transported with joy, on hearing you still lived. You are young, you have many years of happiness and power before you. You would grant me your protection. You would have me made a Cardinal.”

The youthful prisoner remained speechless from sheer astonishment. He seemed genuinely incapable of understanding such a proposition, and to find some difficulty

in descending from the exalted plane of his own thoughts. He could only cry out :

“ Richelieu ! Your own benefactor ! ”

The monk smiled, and continued softly, as he drew still nearer to him :

“ In politics there are no such things as benefactors—only interest. The man a Minister employs, is under no more obligation to be grateful, than the horse to the cavalier who singles him out as his mount. My methods happen to please him, and I have been duly glad of it. But at present, my interests are bound up with his downfall. This man loves no-one but himself. To my own knowledge he has consistently duped me in the way he has perpetually retarded my promotion. But, I tell you, I have certain means of effecting your escape without a sound. There is nothing I cannot do here. I will replace the Cardinal’s men by other men, condemned to death by him. They lie near by, in the Northern tower—the *oubliette* as they call it—overhanging the river, there where you can see it. But these shall be replaced by his own creatures. I am about to send a doctor to Richelieu the Magnificent, whom all the physicians in Paris have given up for dead. And if you will but agree to my plan, this doctor shall apply a remedy to him of a lasting order, and known to all the world.”

“ Leave me,” said Cinq-Mars. “ Out of my sight, you infernal man of God ! You infest the earth with your presence ! You are not a human being ! Creeping along in the twilight, with your furtive muffled footsteps, scaling walls to witness deeds secret and unspeakable, placing yourself between lovers’ hearts, in order that they may for evermore be parted—WHAT ARE YOU ? A soul for ever damned, writhing in torment.”

“ Poor romantic boy,” was Joseph’s answer. “ All your good qualities spoiled by these fantastic notions. As for souls—it is probable there are no such things, nor, for that matter, damnation either. If souls lived on, and returned to earth lamenting, they would surround

me in their thousands. But I have never yet seen one. Not one, I tell you—even in my dreams.”

“Monster,” murmured Cinq-Mars, in a faint voice.

“Words again, and nothing but words,” replied Joseph. “There are no such things as monsters, any more than virtuous men. Here are you and M. de Thou, priding yourselves on what you are pleased to call your integrity of purpose, doing your utmost to encompass the death of at least a hundred thousand men, whereas Richelieu and I are answerable for fewer deaths by far, carried out in darkness, one by one, in the interests of a great power. He who aims at purity of life had best abstain from mingling in the affairs of men; and yet he would do better still to face facts as they are, and say: ‘It may be that the soul has no existence; we are all the sport of circumstance, placed in a world where certain passions cry out for satisfaction, and will not let us rest.’”

“Why, then, I breathe again,” cried Cinq-Mars, “since this man does not believe in God.”

But Joseph continued:

“Both you and I, as well as Richelieu, are born ambitious. We are bound to sacrifice everything to that.”

“Scoundrel! You dare to bracket my name with yours?”

“It is nothing but the truth,” retorted the monk. “The only difference is, as you can see for yourself, that our system is better than yours.”

“Miserable wretch! My motive was love——”

“No, no, a thousand times no! You are losing yourself in words again. You duped yourself, maybe, but all the time you acted for yourself alone. Did I not hear you talking to this young girl? Each of you thought of your own self and nothing else. There was no love between you. She was thinking of her rank, and you of your ambition. Love is nothing but our wish to be adored, and seem perfect in the eyes of others. Another

form of that sacred egotism which alone I recognise as God."

"Cruel viper," cried out Cinq-Mars. "Is it not enough to have brought about our death? Why have you come here to poison that very life you are about to take from us? Who has taught you this devil's trick of analysing hearts?"

"Hatred of everything which is above me," replied Joseph, with his soft insincere laugh, "and my perpetual desire to crush beneath my feet all those I hate. Therein lies the secret spring of my ambition, and my power to probe the weak spot of other men's imaginings. Beautiful fruits no doubt they are, but at the heart of every one of them a worm is gnawing."

"Merciful God, dost Thou hear him?" exclaimed Cinq-Mars, rising and raising his arms to heaven.

Cinq-Mars had undergone a strange metamorphosis in the solitude of his prison, with the helpful aid of his really religious companion. The prospect of imminent death had swum into his vision like an unknown planet, and all familiar objects were now freshly coloured by its rays. His meditations on eternity, and also—shall we confess it?—his supreme effort to substitute immortal hopes for his poor withered earthly aspirations, and to direct towards God all that frenzy of loving which had proved so fatal to him in his life—all these things together had combined to produce a strangely different being, and as the ear of corn will ripen suddenly at a touch of the sun's rays, his soul had suddenly acquired a maturer hue, under the mysterious influence of his approaching end.

"God in Heaven," he repeated, "if this creature and his master go by the name of men, what then am I? A man also? Look down, oh Lord, upon us. Behold the way where two ambitions meet—one egotistical and smirched with blood, the other faithful and devoid of stain; one filled with the breath of hatred, the other inspired by love alone. Behold, I say, and judge and pardon. Forgive us for our grievous fault in walking

for one single day in a path which has no name but one, whatever be the goal at which we aimed."

Joseph tapped impatiently with his foot, and now interrupted him harshly.

"When you have made an end of praying," said he, "perhaps you will tell me if you want my help. Say the word, and you shall be saved."

"Never, villainous creature, never!" replied Henri d'Effiat. "I will not be linked in any way with you and your ways of blood. This is not the first time I have refused to stoop to murder. And you—would have been the victim"

"Then you did wrong. Had you consented, you would have been triumphant at this moment"

"Ah! And what good would all my power have done me, shared with a woman who did not understand me, with love so weak that she forsook me for a crown? From that moment I no longer wanted power as the prize of victory. Judge then what meaning it would have for me when rooted in a crime!"

Whereat the monk burst into a fit of laughter.

"Your folly is beyond belief!" he cried.

"With her, everything! Without her, nothing! My whole soul was bound up with her and her alone!"

"Impossible. You insist through nothing but sheer pride and vanity," replied Joseph. "It is against all the dictates of nature."

"You who deny all kinds of faith," continued Cinq-Mars, "what do you make of the devotion of my friend?"

"Nothing at all. He has wished to follow you because—because——" And here the monk, slightly put out of countenance, paused for a moment to think. "Because—he has formed you into shape, and you are his pupil. He has the pride of authorship in you. He had formed the habit of preaching to you, and he realises that he will never again find any pupil so docile and attentive. Custom has constrained him to the belief that his life is bound up with yours—something like that—he follows you as a matter of routine. Besides,

the matter is not concluded yet. Let us wait and see the result of the examination ; assuredly he will deny all knowledge of the conspiracy."

" He will never deny it," cried Cinq-Mars, with all his force.

" Then he did know ? Now you have said it ! " cried out Joseph triumphantly. " After all this time you have said it at the end."

" Heavens ! What have I done ? " moaned Cinq-Mars. And he hid his face in his hands.

" Keep calm. He will be saved in spite of you, if you will agree to my offer."

For some time d'Effiat did not reply, and the monk went on :

" Save your friend—the royal favour is awaiting you, and perhaps your love—gone astray for a moment——"

" Man, or whatsoever you may be, if you bear within you the faint traces of a human heart," replied the prisoner, " save him. He is the purest living soul upon the earth. Have him carried far away from here, while he is still sleeping. For awake, you would never get him to consent."

" And what good would that do me ? " said the monk, with a laugh. " It is you I require, and your support."

Cinq-Mars, the impetuous, now rose, and seizing Joseph by the arm, and fixing a most terrible look upon him, cried :

" Scoundrel ! I have humbled my friend in stooping to plead for him with you ! Come with me ! " And he drew aside the curtain which separated him from de Thou's room. " Look, and deny, if you can, the faith which is in an immortal soul ! Compare the turmoil of your triumph to the calm of our defeat, the vileness of your plots and plans to the grandeur of our captivity, and your blood-stained watchings to the sleep of the just man ! "

A solitary lamp shed its rays upon his friend. De Thou was still on his knees before a large ebony crucifix, but sleep seemed to have stolen upon him in his prayers.

His head was tilted slightly backwards, and still raised towards the cross above him ; his lips were parted in a smile unearthly and serene, while his weary body rested against the hangings and cushions of the *prie-dieu* before which he knelt.

" Jesu ! How he sleeps ! " cried the monk in amazement. For it was one of Joseph's habits to mingle sacred epithets with the profane workings of his own mind.

The next moment he retired from the room abruptly, his hand to his eyes, as though dazzled by some celestial vision.

" Brou—brr—brr—— " said he, shaking his head, and passing his hand across his face. " All this is mere childish nonsense. I should begin to take it seriously if I thought of it too much. It serves its purpose in quieting the mind—like opium. But all this is beside the point. Yes or no ? Which is it to be ? "

" No ! " cried Cinq-Mars, taking him by the shoulder, and thrusting him out of the room. " I no longer desire life, and repent no more that I have failed once again to save de Thou, for neither would he consent to live at such a price. He did not give himself up at Narbonne only to recant at Lyons."

" Then wake him ! Here are the judges," cried the angry monk. His voice was bitter, and he laughed.

As he spoke, a detachment of Scotch guards entered the room, and behind them, lighted by torches, walked fourteen judges, clad in trailing robes, and with features difficult to discern in the dim light. In silence they took their places on either side of the vast room. They were the commissioners appointed by Richelieu to conduct this gloomy and solemn affair—all of them save Cardinal's men, and chosen by him with the utmost care from Tarascon. He had expressly desired that the Chancellor Seguier should attend Lyons in person, " in order," as he wrote, in his instructions to Louis XIII., delivered by Chavigny, " to forestall any obstacles that might arise in his absence." He also added that M. de Château-Neuf was at Toulouse, assisting at the death of Montmorency,

and M. de Bellievre at Paris, conducting the case against Biron. Their authority and knowledge of the law and forms of justice made the presence of these gentlemen indispensable.

The Chancellor Seguier hastened to Lyons accordingly, but on his arrival was informed that no private interviews with the guilty men would be necessary, from fear that he might be influenced by his old feeling of friendship for the younger prisoner. Together with his commissioners, he had just been receiving the depositions of the Duc d'Orleans, first at Villefranche, then at Vivey, two leagues from Lyons, whither this unhappy prince had been ordered to retire, trembling and imploring in the midst of his people, left to him out of compassion, under the careful supervision of French and Swiss Guards. Gaston's replies had been dictated to him by the Cardinal, word for word, and as a result of this docility, he had been formally exempted from the ordeal of being confronted personally with Cinq-Mars and de Thou. After which, the Chancellor and his Commissioners had carefully prepared the case against M. de Bouillon, and now, elated with these preliminary successes, were about to bring their full weight to bear against the two young rebels doomed to the scaffold.

The names of the State Councillors accompanying Pierre Seguier have been preserved to us, but not those of the other Commissioners. They are merely reported as consisting of six members of the Grenoble Parliament, together with two Presidents. As Recorder of the State Council, Laubardemont was greatly in evidence, having assisted at every detail of the case. Joseph could often be seen whispering into the ears of the principal Councillors with ceremonious politeness, while casting glances of fierce irony in the direction of his old enemy.

An arm-chair having been drawn forward to serve as the prisoner's stool, Cinq-Mars's reply was now waited for in profound silence.

His voice, as he spoke, was calm and low :

" First I would draw the Chancellor's attention to the

fact that it is within my right to appeal to the Parliament of Paris, and to deny the right of my judges here to try me, since the Council contains two of my enemies, while at the head of it is one of my friends, Monsieur Seguier himself, who owes his position to my influence. But, gentlemen, I will spare you a world of trouble, inasmuch as I plead guilty to this conspiracy, conceived and planned by myself alone. It is my wish to die. Therefore I have nothing to add on my own behalf; but if you desire justice should be done, you will spare the life of my friend, whom the King himself has been pleased to call the most honest man in all France, and who is now facing death solely for my sake."

"Bring him in," ordered Laubardemont.

Two guards entered M. de Thou's apartment and returned with him. He bowed gravely as he entered, and with a smile on his lips that was not of this world, embraced Cinq-Mars.

"At length," said he, "we have achieved our day of triumph. Heaven and eternal happiness now wait upon us."

"We have just learned, monsieur," said Laubardemont, "we have just learned from the mouth of M. Cinq-Mars himself, that you were privy to this conspiracy."

Whereupon de Thou replied composedly, still with the same smile and downward gaze:

"I have spent my life, gentlemen, in studying the laws of mankind, and I know that one prisoner cannot be condemned upon the witness of another. Nor, as I told you before, should I have been believed, had I denounced the King's brother without any proof. My life and death are entirely in your hands. Nevertheless, in weighing them up, the one against the other, I clearly realise that any life you may see fit to grant me is valueless to me after the loss of M. Cinq-Mars. Therefore I declare and confess myself privy to his conspiracy. I did all within my power to dissuade him from it. But he believed in me as his one and only faithful friend, and betray him I

would not. For this very reason I condemn myself according to the laws framed by my own father—who, I hope, will pardon me.”

Whereupon the two friends embraced fervently, and Cinq-Mars cried out :

“ My friend ! My friend ! Miserable man that I am to have brought about your death. I have betrayed you twice over—and yet you understand.”

On which de Thou, raising his eyes to Heaven, replied :

“ Believe me, Cinq-Mars, dearest friend, we are the happiest of men. From an earthly point of view, I might find it in my heart to pity you. But God in his Heaven knows I love you too much for that ! What have we done to deserve this happiness of martyrdom together, you and I ? ”

The judges were utterly taken aback by this attitude of calm resignation, for which they were prepared not at all.

“ Ah ! If somebody would only give me a halberd,” a husky voice was heard to growl (it came from old Grandchamp, who had crept into the room unobserved, his eyes all aflame with fury), “ not a single one of these gentlemen in black would be left standing to treat my master so ! ”

Whereupon two halberdiers silently placed themselves one on either side of him. The old man stopped muttering, and as though seeking consolation, went over to the window, on the side overlooking the river, untouched as yet by the sun's rays. And there he stood, and seemed to take no further notice of what was passing in the room around him.

Laubardemont, fearing lest the judges should show the slightest inclination towards leniency, cried out in a loud voice :

“ By express orders of His Eminence the Cardinal, these two gentlemen must be put to the ordeal by torture without any delay.”

“ For a moment Cinq-Mars was his old self again, through sheer indignation, and with folded arms he strode

over towards Laubardemont and Joseph in such a way that they recoiled before him. The former instinctively raised his hand to his forehead.

"Is this Loudon?" cried out the prisoner.

But on de Thou drawing near and taking him by the hand, he mastered himself, and looking at the judges, said in a voice well under his control :

"Gentlemen, this seems to me sheer savagery. A man of my age, and in my position, should not be subjected to all these formalities. I have told you everything, and intend to keep nothing back. I die willingly and with a stout heart. There is not the slightest need to resort to torture. Secrets have never yet been extracted by the bodily sufferings of men such as we are. We are voluntary prisoners, and gave ourselves up at the time of our own choosing. We have told you all that is needful to enable you to pronounce our sentence of death, and nothing further is required of us. We have got what we desired, and you shall know no more."

Here he was interrupted by M. de Thou, who cried :

"My dearest friend, what is this thing you are doing? Gentlemen, he does not really mean what he says. We are not refusing the martyrdom which God has placed within our reach. Nay, rather, we demand it."

"But why," cried Cinq-Mars, "why the need of all this revolting torture, that we may conquer Heaven? You are a martyr already—a voluntary sacrifice on the altar of friendship! Gentlemen, should there be any secrets of importance, they are known to me alone, as chief of the conspiracy. Confine your torments, then, to me, if we must receive the treatment reserved for vilest criminals."

"Gentlemen, of your charity," cried out de Thou, "do not prevent me from sharing the sufferings of my friend. I have not followed him thus far to abandon him now in this most blessed hour, and I mean, so far as in me lies, to tread with him the path to Heaven."

Meanwhile Laubardemont and Joseph had been

debating together. The latter, fearing lest the agony of torture should result in the confession of his recent interview with the prisoner, was against it being resorted to ; while the former, regarding mere death as insufficient to complete his triumph, insistently exacted it. The judges gathered around to listen to these two secret agents of their great Minister. But the majority of them, finding reason to suspect that the monk's favour stood the higher of the two, were inclined to favour him, and this decision on the side of mercy was much strengthened by his closing words :

" I know all their secrets already, and they are not of the slightest use to us, being concerned with matters we had best ignore. Two people would be in danger of denunciation—the King himself by Monsieur le Grand, and the Queen by his friend, though, as a matter of fact, they would never speak. I know them too well. The one would keep silence from pride and the other from piety. Leave them alone. Torture would only disfigure them, and cripple them so that they could not walk. That would spoil the whole ceremony of the execution. They must appear before the people."

The last consideration won the day, and the judges withdrew to deliberate with the Chancellor. On their way out Joseph said to Laubardemont :

" I have arranged ample entertainment for you on your visit here. After you have finished your deliberations there are three more prisoners waiting for you in the North Tower."

The prisoners referred to were the three remaining judges of Urbain Grandier. Having made this announcement, he burst into a fit of laughter, and left the room last of all, pushing the astonished Inquisitor before him as he went.

As the doors closed behind this gloomy procession, Grandchamp, freed from the supervision of his two gaolers, darted over to his master's side, and seizing him by the hand, began to speak to him imploringly :

" In the name of Heaven, monseigneur, come out on

to the terrace, and I will show you something. In the name of your mother, come with me——”

At this very moment the door opened to admit Abbé Quillet.

“My children! My dear, dear boys!” sobbed the old man. “Alas! Why have I never been allowed to enter till this very moment? Your mother, Henri, your brother and sister—they are all lying hidden here——”

“Not a word more, Monsier l’Abbé,” interrupted Grandchamp. “And you, monseigneur, come on to the terrace.”

But the old priest still held his pupil in his arms.

“There is always hope We are still hoping for mercy.”

“I should refuse it,” said Cinq-Mars.

“God’s mercy is all we desire now,” said de Thou.

“Be silent,” interrupted Grandchamp once again, “the judges are returning.”

And, of a truth, the door opened again, and the sinister cortège appeared once more, only this time without Joseph and Laubardemont.

“Gentlemen,” cried out the good old Abbé, turning towards the Commissioners, “I come direct from Paris, where all believe that these conspirators will be pardoned. In the presence of the King I saw Monsieur himself, and the result of M. de Bouillon’s examination has not been unfa——”

“Silence!” called out M. de Ceton, Lieutenant of the Scotch Guards.”

By this time the fourteen Commissioners had ranged themselves around the room. Monsieur de Thou, hearing himself called before the Clerk of the Court to receive the decree pronounced, gave vent to one of those transports of religious joy only known to saints and martyrs on the point of death. Standing before the official, he pronounced the words:

“*Quam speciosi pedes evangelizantium pacem, evangelizantium bona!*”

After which, taking Cinq-Mars by the hand, he knelt

with bared head to hear the sentence. D'Effiat remained standing, and no-one dared to interfere with him.

The decree was pronounced as follows :

“ Between His Majesty's Procurator General, Conductor of all cases treasonable and criminal on the one part : And Messieurs Henri d'Effiat de Cinq-Mars, Squire in Chief of France, aged twenty-two years ; and François Auguste de Thou, aged thirty-five years, Councillor and Member of His Majesty's Parliament ; prisoners at the Château de Pierre-Encise at Lyons, defendants and accused, on the other part : Whereby, in view of the Criminal Prosecution conducted by the said Procurator General of the King, against the said d'Effiat and de Thou, and the statements, confessions, and information thereby obtained, together with authentic copies of the Treaty signed with Spain, the Council has declared :

1. “ That anyone entertaining harmful projects against the person of the Monarch or his Minister, is regarded, according to our ancient laws and constitutions, as guilty of High Treason ;

2. “ That, in accordance with the Third Ordonnance of King Louis XI, anyone being aware of said conspiracy and not revealing same should incur the penalty of death ;

“ Whereby the Commissioners deputed by His Majesty have declared the said d'Effiat and de Thou attainted and convicted of High Treason, to wit :

“ The said d'Effiat de Cinq-Mars for conspiracies and projects, leagues and treaties made by him with foreigners against the State ;

“ And the said de Thou for being privy to the said projects ;

“ In reparation for which crimes they are duly deprived of all honours and all dignities, and condemned to execution on a scaffold erected for this purpose in the *Place des Terraux* of this town ;

“ And also that all their wealth and property be acquired and confiscated by the King, reverting to the possession of the crown from which it was received ; the sum of 60,000 livres having been previously deducted for application to charitable works.”

After this decree had been pronounced, M. de Thou cried in a loud voice :

" Thanks be to God. The Lord be praised ! "

" I have never yet feared death," were the words uttered by Cinq-Mars, in a cold emotionless voice.

After which, in accordance with tradition, M. Ceton, Lieutenant of the Scotch Guards, an old soldier of sixty-six, declared with much emotion that he forthwith made over his prisoners to the Mayor of Lyons, *Sieur Thomé*, and took his leave of them, surrounded by his body-guard, all silent and with tear-dimmed eyes.

" Weep not," Cinq-Mars adjured them ; " tears are useless. Pray, rather, to God for us, and rest assured I do not fear death."

He shook them by the hand, and de Thou embraced them. Whereupon these gentlemen departed, tears still in their eyes, and covering their faces in their cloaks as they went.

" Cruel, cruel men ! " cried Abbé Quillet. " To find weapons with which to face you, they have had to rummage in a tyrant's arsenal. Why have I been allowed to enter now, and only now ? "

" In capacity of confessor, monsieur," said a Commissioner to him in a low voice. " For the past two months not a single stranger has been allowed within our gates."

As soon as the large doors were closed, and the curtains drawn, old Grandchamp cried again, in his imploring voice :

" To the terrace, in Heaven's name ! " And he started dragging his master by the arm, followed by de Thou. The old tutor followed them, limping.

" What is this whim of yours, at a moment like this ? " his master asked the faithful old servant, with a grave indulgence in his voice.

" Look at the town boundary chains," implored the old man.

The sky was just beginning to take its colour from the rising sun. The horizon was one dazzling streak of

yellow, against which the dark blue forms of the mountains stood out in all their boldness ; the waves of the River Saône, together with the boundary chains stretched from one shore to another, were covered as yet by a slight mist which hovered over the town of Lyons and veiled its roofs from sight. In all this wonderful landscape, none but the highest peaks were touched as yet by the sun's rays. Within the town itself, the towers of the town hall and the steeples of Saint Nizier, the monastries of the Carmelites and of Saint Mairie on the neighbouring hills, and the entire fortress of Pierre Encise, were gilded with the light of dawn. In the villages around could be heard the joyful sound of bells. Only the walls of the prison were silent as death.

" Well ? " asked Cinq-Mars. " What have you brought us out here for ? To behold the beauty of the fields and the thriving towns ? And the peace of the little villages as well ? Ah, believe me, they all contain as many griefs and passions as those which have brought us to our present state."

But now the old Abbé and Grandchamp were leaning over the parapet of the terrace and gazing towards the shore.

" The fog is too thick. It hides everything," said the Abbé.

" Our last sun is a long time in making its appearance ! " quoth de Thou.

" But do you not see, at the foot of the rocks, on the other side of the river, a little white house, between the Gate of Halincourt and the Boulevard Saint-Jean ? " asked the Abbé.

" I see nothing," replied Cinq-Mars, " but a pile of grey stones."

" This cursed fog is too thick," growled Grandchamp, leaning further and further over the parapet, like a stranded sailor, peering to catch a glimpse of a sail on the horizon.

" Ssh ! " whispered the Abbé. " Someone is talking near by."

And, of a truth, a faint mysterious sound of murmuring was now heard to proceed from the little turret at the back of the rampart, overlooking the terrace. But as it was scarcely louder than the rustling of pigeons in a dove-cot, it had hitherto escaped the prisoners' notice.

"Have they come for us already?" said Cinq-Mars.

"Nonsense," Grandchamp burst in. "Take no notice. This is the tower of the *oubliettes*. It is two months now since I have been prowling around this fortress, and I have seen bodies falling from that turret into the river at least once a week. We have other things to think of now. I can see a light in the window over there."

But an irresistible curiosity impelled the prisoners still to turn their gaze towards the turret, in spite of the horror of their own situation. The turret was built so that it jutted well out over the rock, and beneath it swirled a pool of water, formed by a *cul de sac*, into which flowed a tributary of the Saône. Owing to the height of the rocks which surrounded it, the whirlpool was immensely deep, and an old disused mill-wheel could now be discerned, turning around in the green-hued water at a rapid rate. A creaking sound was now audible, similar to that of a draw-bridge being lowered and then raised. This sound was repeated three times, and three times something black could be seen falling into the water, with a resounding splash.

"Merciful God! Are those the forms of men?" cried the Abbé. And he made the sign of the Cross.

"To me they looked like brown-clad figures falling through the air," said Grandchamp. "I should say they are some of the Cardinal's friends."

Once again the heavy trap was heard to fall, and with a mighty splash the green water received a load so heavy that the large mill wheel groaned beneath its burden. One of its large spokes broke off, and the form of a man could now be seen, tangled amidst the old worm-eaten planks, and colouring the waters beneath with the dark

hue of his blood. Twice he turned round on the wheel, shrieking. Then he disappeared. It was Laubardemont.

Sick with horror, Cinq-Mars recoiled.

"The finger of Providence," said Grandchamp. "It is three years now that Urbain Grandier has been waiting. Come. Every moment is precious. Gentlemen, I beg of you not to stand rooted here as in a dream! If it is Laubardemont there is nothing to wonder at in that, for these scoundrels eat up one another like so many rats. But we will snatch their daintiest dish from them yet. Praise be to God! I see the signal now! We are saved! All is ready! Run over to that side, Monsieur le'Abbé! See—there is the white handkerchief at the window! Our friends are ready for us!"

Whereupon the Abbé seized both his friends by the hand, and dragged them over to that portion of the terrace where they had first been brought.

"Listen, both of you, to me," he said. "First of all, not one of the conspirators have availed themselves of the place of safety you secured for them. They are all assembled at Lyons, disguised, in large numbers, and they mean to do everything within their power to rescue you. They have fixed on the moment when you will be taken to the scaffold, and you yourself are to give the signal, by placing your hat on your head when they should commence the attack."

And then the good Abbé, half in tears, and yet with a smile of hope still upon his face, related how, after his pupil's arrest, he himself had hastened to Paris, where the Cardinal's deeds had been so wrapped in mystery that not a soul knew the place where the Master of the Horse was kept in custody. It was even rumoured that he had been sent abroad, and when it was reported that Monsieur and the Duc de Bouillon had made their peace with the King, all doubts as to his safety had been set at rest, and the whole business, unattended as it was by any executions, had faded from the public mind. There was even a certain amount of rejoicing in Paris over the cession of the town of Sedan to the Kingdom of France,

in return for letters granted to M. de Bouillon, establishing his innocence to the same extent as that of Monsieur. The sum total of all these events had been an increase of admiration for the Cardinal's clemency towards the guilty parties, who, it was reported, had even gone so far as to desire his death. It was even rumoured that he himself had assisted in the banishment of Cinq-Mars and de Thou, concerning himself with the utmost generosity with their refuge in foreign parts, after having effected their arrest, with the greatest courage, in the heart of his camp at Perpignan.

At this point of the story, the resignation of Cinq-Mars began to fail him, and he clutched at the arm of his friend :

"Stop!" he cried out. "Are we not even to be allowed the credit of our voluntary self-surrender? Are we to sacrifice every single thing, including the judgment of posterity?"

"That, too, is nothing but vanity," replied de Thou, placing his finger on his mouth. "But ssh! Hear our good Abbé out to the end."

The old tutor, believing the self-possession of these two young men to be entirely due to their satisfaction at the prospect of an immediate rescue, now abandoned himself without restraint to that pleasure which all old people experience in relating news, even when it is bad news. He described all his fruitless efforts to find the place of his pupil's captivity, of which both Court and city were kept in total ignorance. Even in the most secret places his name was not pronounced without fear. It was the Queen herself who finally informed him of the imprisonment of Cinq-Mars at Pierre Encise. She had even advocated his journey thither, instructing him to inform the Maréchal d'Effiat and the rest of the conspirators, in order that they might make one final attempt to rescue their chief. To this end, the Queen had gone so far as to send many gentlemen from Auvergne and Touraine into Lyons to assist with this last effort.

"Our dear good Queen," went on the old priest; "she

wept bitterly the day I saw her, and said there was nothing she would not do to try and save you. She was continually reproaching herself about some letter, but I know not what it was. And she constantly would speak of the safety of France, without explaining what she meant. She told me she looked upon you with great admiration, and adjured you to save yourself, if only out of pity to her, who would hear your name for ever after with remorse."

"And did she say nothing more?" asked de Thou, supporting Cinq-Mars in his arms, for he was deathly pale.

"Nothing," replied the Abbé.

"And was there no-one else who spoke of me?" demanded the Master of the Horse.

"No-one," said the old man.

"Had she but written!" Cinq-Mars was heard to mutter to himself.

"My father, let us not forget that you were sent here to confess us," was de Thou's only comment.

But at this point old Grandchamp flung himself upon Cinq-Mars, and literally dragged him over to the other side of the terrace, crying out in a half-choking voice:

"Master, master, oh my beloved master—do you not see them? There—there they are—she is there—they are there—all of them——"

"Who are there, my dear old friend?" said his master to him.

"Who? Gracious God! Look towards that window, over yonder! Do you not see who it is? Your mother, your sisters, your brother!"

The day had now fully dawned, and in the distance the forms of women could be seen, waving white handkerchiefs. One of them, clad all in black, was holding her arms out towards the prison. She would then withdraw for a moment, as though to compose her spirits, only to re-appear again with outstretched arms, or else to place her hand upon her heart.

Cinq-Mars recognised his mother and the rest of his

family, and for a moment his strength forsook him. He laid his head upon the bosom of his friend and wept.

"How many deaths must I endure?" he murmured. And then, standing upon the rampart and waving his hand to his relations, he turned towards the Abbé.

"My father, let us go down now, at once," he said. "You shall confess me, and before the tribunal of God Himself shall tell me if the remainder of my life is worth the shedding of one drop of blood."

Whereupon Cinq-Mars confessed before God Who made him, those secrets of his unhappy love that were known to none but himself and Marie of Mantua. And history has recorded that a portrait of a great lady, all set in diamonds, was given by him to his confessor, to be used solely for the relief of the poor and needy.

De Thou likewise received confession, after which he wrote a letter, then turned once more towards the Abbé with the words: "This is the last thought I wish to leave behind me on this earth. We are about to tread the path to Paradise." He then retired within his room, where he was heard reciting aloud the psalm *Miserere mei, Deus*, etc., and the tone of his voice, and the whole demeanour of the man, was such that he appeared as one inspired, so much so that the men who guarded him were dumb in his presence, and found trembling, both with fear and with respect.

Meanwhile, the city of Lyons went on its peaceful way, and it was with the utmost surprise that its inhabitants saw, arriving with the dawn, troops of infantry and cavalry, marching in through every gate. French and Swiss Guards, the regiments of Pompadour, armed troops of Maurevert, and Carabineers from la Roque, marched silently past, while troops of cavalry, with muskets across the pommels of their saddles, took up their position surrounding the fortress of Pierre Encise; the infantry lined up on either bank of the Saône, from the fortress gate to the place of execution.

Four companies of townsmen, known by the name of

Pennonage, eleven or twelve hundred strong, were stationed—so says Montrésor in his journal—in the middle of the Place des Terreaux in such a manner as to enclose a square space, into which none but privileged officials were allowed to enter. “In the middle of this space a scaffold seven feet high had been erected, in the centre of which was placed a block. The scaffold overlooked the market place, and against one side of it, facing “*les Dames de Saint Pierre*,” a small ladder of eight rungs had been placed.”

The secret of the prisoners' names had been well kept. The gates of the impenetrable fortress were never known to open to receive its inmates save at night time, and its various dungeons had been said to contain both father and son for years at a time, separated only by a few feet, without either being aware of the other's presence. The suddenness of these preparations was met with extreme surprise, and the townsfolk hastened to gather round, not knowing whether the occasion was one of merriment or human torture.

The same secrecy exercised by the Cardinal's agents had also been preserved by all the conspirators, for their own heads were at stake.

Montrésor, Fontrailles, the Baron of Beauvau, Olivier d'Entraigues, Gondi, the Comte de Lude and Lawyer Fournier, all disguised as soldiers, workmen, or mountebanks, and armed with daggers under their jackets, had posted among the crowd more than five hundred gentlemen and serving men dressed in the same manner as themselves; horses were in readiness along the road to Italy, and boats on the Rhône had been hired in advance. The young Marquis d'Effiat, elder brother to Cinq-Mars, pressed through the crowd, disguised as a Carthusian monk, hovering incessantly between the Place des Terreaux, and the little house where his mother and sister were sheltering, together with the wife of the President of Pontac, sister of de Thou. He would hasten to re-assure them, and raise their hopes to the best of his ability, and then hurry off to rejoin the conspirators

in order to ascertain that each and all were ready for the fray.

By the side of each soldier as they lined the streets, was a man ready to thrust a knife into his heart. The crowd, surging behind the troops, would push them forward, causing them to dislocate their ranks, while each time they would lose a little ground. Ambrosio, the Spaniard, whom Cinq-Mars had taken into his service, disguised as a strolling musician from Catalonia, was told off to deal with the Captain of the Pikemen, and had already picked a quarrel with him by dint of refusing to stop playing on his hurdy-gurdy. Every single man was at his post.

Abbé Gondi, Olivier d'Entraigues and the Marquis d'Effiat were in the midst of a group of fishwives and oyster women, all of them squabbling and shrilling at the top of their voices. They were engaged in jeering at one of their number, younger and more timid than her lusty companions, and d'Effiat now drew near to overhear their quarrel.

"But why," the girl was crying, "why should you want Jean le Roux, honest man as he is, to chop off the heads of two Christian gentlemen, just because he happens to be a butcher by trade? I am his wife, and I will have him do no such dreadful thing—I would rather——"

"Then you are wrong, little simpleton," cried out the women around her; "what matter whether the meat he chops up is dead or alive? You will have your hundred crowns none the less, to buy your three children new clothes. Give thanks to God that you are the wife of a butcher! And you should thank Him, my girl, for the good fortune he sends to you, by means of His Eminence!"

"Leave me in peace, I tell you," replied the girl. "I want no such good fortune. I saw these two young gentlemen from out of the window, and they looked as harmless as lambs."

"Well, and do we not turn lambs and calves too into good butcher's meat?" demanded one of her neighbours,

rejoicing in the name of *Le Bon*. "It's a shame these things should happen to a silly little creature like you! What would the reverend Capucin father have to say about it, I wonder?"

"Ah, but this joking mob makes me feel sick," muttered Olivier d'Entraigues, in a dull voice.

But the women overheard him, and began to murmur against him.

"Mob!" they said one to another, "and who does that little mason man think he is, plastered all over from head to foot?"

"Why—can't you see?" called out one of them. "He is a gentleman disguised! Look at his white hands! That man has never done a day's work in his life!"

"Yes—yes—it's some little tricked-out conspirator. I have a great mind to seek out *M. le Chevalier du Guet* and get him arrested——"

The Abbé Gondi, fully realising the danger of the situation, flung himself upon Olivier, with words and gestures suited to the workman's garments which he wore, and shook him by the collar, as he cried:

"You are right, friends! This is a little imbecile who does not know what work is! My father has had him for apprentice the past two years, and all the time he has done nothing but comb out those golden locks of his to win a smile from the girls! Get back to the shop again, you little good for nothing!" And, raining blows upon his shoulders, he beat the boy through the crowd, until they had both reached a different point of observation. After which he let the thoughtless lad go, and demanded the letter which he declared he had to deliver to *Cinq-Mars* once they had rescued him. Olivier handed it to him, after having had it in his pocket a couple of months.

"Upon my soul," exclaimed Gondi, "but this might have contained something vitally important for our friend! You should have remembered it before this. Now I am going to unseal it."

"Oh—it is only from that old fellow *Bassompierre*. Read away."

"MY DEAR BOY,

"I hear from the depths of the Bastille, where I still lie, that you are instigating a plot against that tyrant Richelieu, who still continues to humble to the dust our good old Aristocracy and Parliament. I hear that our nobles are smitten down and condemned to death by judges of no account, against all the rights of privilege due to their condition and established practice. . . ."

"How the old idiot does babble on," interrupted the page. And he burst out laughing.

"Not such an idiot as you imagine. Though I fear he is somewhat remote from the matter in hand."

"This generous project can only meet with my approval, and I beseech you to accord me all the information within your power. . . ."

"The language!" cried out Olivier once more. "Surely he knows we can express things better than that nowadays? Why can we not 'acquaint him,' I should like to know?"

"For God's sake allow me to read!" cried the Abbé. "A hundred years from now and they will be mocking at the words used by you and me." And he went on:

"Notwithstanding my advanced years, I am still in a position to be able to advise you. When I inform you of what happened to me in 1560. . . ."

"Ah, but really time is too short to wade through all this. . . Let us get to the end. . . Here it is . . .

"When I recall that afternoon at dinner at the house of your mother, the Maréchale d'Effiat, and ask myself what has become of all my fellow guests, I find it a subject for tears. Poor Puy-Laurens has died of grief at being forgotten by Monsieur in his prison at Vincennes. De Launay has been killed in a duel, and I am grieved thereat; for notwithstanding his part in my arrest, he treated me with courtesy, and I have always recognised him as a brave man.

As for me, I shall not see the light of day until the Cardinal is dead. You may remember, my boy, that we sat down thirteen to table ; old superstitions should never be made a mock of. Give thanks to God that Fortune has withheld her frowns from you alone. . . .”

“ Could it have come at a more fitting time ? ” exclaimed Olivier, with a burst of laughter. And this time the Abbé Gondi could not refrain from joining in.

They tore the useless letter in pieces, so that the poor old man’s imprisonment might not be prolonged by its discovery, and drew near once more to the Place des Terraux, and the encircling guards, ready to start the attack the moment the signal was given by Cinq-Mars placing his hat upon his head.

With much satisfaction they observed all their confederates at their posts, alert and watching. The crowd, thronging around them, helped them unawares. A number of young schoolgirls all in white, with long veils, now passed near to the Abbey. They were on their way to the church to attend Mass, and the nuns who conducted them, believing, like everyone else, that this was a procession in honour of some grand personage, allowed them to clamber up on to a large block of stone placed behind the soldiers. And there they stood, clustered together, with all the grace natural to their age, like twenty beautiful statues on one single base. They looked like a group of vestal virgins, attending the bloody spectacle of the gladiators at the Roman games.

The Abbé Gondi observed with intense annoyance how Olivier immediately proceeded to forget his mason’s dress and adopt the airs and graces of a man far removed from his humble sphere, in order to attract the attention of the schoolgirls ; indeed, he was already approaching them with a toss of his fair curls, when Fontrailles and Montrésor appeared upon the scene, disguised as Swiss soldiers, followed by a group of gentlemen in sailors’ garb, with iron-shod cudgels in their hand. The pallid faces of all these men boded nothing that was good. A blare of trumpets was heard.

"Let us stay where we are," said one man to another.
"This is the place."

The gloom of the atmosphere and the silence of the spectators, contrasted strangely with the happy curious glances of the young girls, together with their childish exclamations.

"See what a fine procession!" they cried. "There they go! Why, there must be five hundred of them at least, all with their armour and red coats—and their beautiful horses——"

"Those are foreigners from Catalonia," said a French guardsman.

"But who is that within their midst? See—see—a lovely gilded coach! But there is no-one inside!"

"Who are those three men walking on foot? Where are they going?"

"To their death," said Fontrailles, in a voice so sinister that all other voices were hushed. Now nothing more was to be heard but the noise of the horses passing on their way, with the inevitable pauses from time to time, common to all processions. And then was revealed to their view a spectacle both pitiful and curious. An old man, with a tonsured head, stumbled painfully along, supported by two young men of attractive mien. They clasped their hands, by way of support, behind their old friend's back, while each one on either side grasped him by the arm with his spare hand. He that walked on his left hand side was clothed in black; his countenance was grave, and he kept his eyes lowered on the ground. The other, younger in years, was sumptuously clothed. A holland doublet, covered with golden lace, with puffed and embroidered sleeves, encircled him from neck to waist, much after the manner of a lady's corsage; the rest of his apparel consisted of black velvet ornamented with silver palms, together with grey-coloured boots with red heels, to which golden spurs were attached. The whole costume served to set off the young man's elegance and grace. He bowed to right and left of the lines of people, with a melancholy smile. An old

servant, with white beard and moustaches, followed in his wake, bowed with grief, and leading by the bridle two chargers, in all their panoply of war. The school-girls were silent now, but they could not restrain their sobs.

"It is the poor old man they are leading to his death," they murmured among themselves; "and his sons on either side supporting him."

"On your knees, children, and pray for his soul!" cried out one of the nuns to them.

"On your knees indeed!" shouted out Gondi, "and pray to the Lord for their salvation!"

And all the confederates repeated after him: "On your knees! On your knees!" themselves giving an example that was followed in silence by all the crowd.

"That will make it easier for us to watch him," whispered Gondi to Montrésor. "Get on to your feet. What is he doing now?"

"He has stopped, and seems to be addressing the people on our side. I believe he recognises us."

All the houses and windows, all the walls, roofs and raised places commanding a view of the Square, were filled to overflowing with people of every rank and age. And now the crowd became completely silent—a stillness in which a fly might have been heard to beat its wings, or the least breath of wind carrying the specks of dust along its course. But the air was still as it could be, the sun was shining, and the sky was blue. The people listened. By now the procession had nearly reached the Place des Terraux. Already the noise of hammering could be heard—and then the voice of Cinq-Mars.

A young Carthusian monk came forward, his face pale as death, a soldier on either side. The conspirators rose to their feet above the kneeling citizens, each with his hand at his girdle, where their daggers lay concealed, each pressing close up to the soldier destined to fall by his hand.

"What is he doing now?" asked the monk. "Has he placed his hat upon his head?"

The soldier nearest him turned round to reply. "His hat? Why no. He has cast it from him, and flung it on the ground."

CHAPTER XIII

THE FÊTE

WHILE the scenes we have just witnessed were being enacted at Lyons, and the sinister procession passing on its fatal way, a magnificent festival was taking place in Paris, with all the luxury and execrable taste peculiar to that age. It was the Cardinal's wish that the two principal cities of France should be simultaneous spectators of his personal power and aggrandisement.

The opening of the Cardinal's palace was given as pretext for this festival held in honour of the King and all his Court. The entire Empire lay beneath Richelieu's feet, subdued by force, and it was now his ardent wish to include beneath his sway the master spirits of his time. Tired of domination, his energies were now diverted to the art of pleasing, and his resolution to attract the *litterati* to his side. The tragedy of *Mirame* was about to be presented in the large hall expressly built for this auspicious occasion, at an additional cost to the entertainment, according to Pelisson, of three hundred thousand crowns.

The Guard of the Minister-in-Chief was turned out to a man. His four companies of Musketeers and Guardsmen were ranged along the vast stairways, and within the entrance to the long galleries of the Cardinal's Palace. Everywhere the predominating note was Pomp and Pride. On the grand staircase Musketeers were posted at each step, with a flaming torch in one hand and an immense carbine in the other. In and out among these living candelabras perambulated the gentlemen of his retinue, while in the large garden outside, surrounded by chestnut trees, were stationed two companies of Light

Horsemen, musket in hand, all at strictest attention, awaiting the slightest command on their master's behalf.

The Cardinal, borne along and followed by his thirty-eight pages, was installed within his private box, all draped in purple, opposite that in which the King was half reclining, behind green curtains that shaded him from the torches' glare. All the Court, distributed around the hall in smaller boxes, rose as he entered. The music began to play a lively overture, and the space on the door was thrown open to people of the town, and to the soldiers, who now made their appearance. In a moment, the ground floor was flooded with an eager throng of spectators, and so closely were they packed that their movements resembled nothing so much as the ripples that flow over a field of corn on a windy day. Several people fainted, and had to be removed. The Minister, contrary to his usual custom, put forth his emaciated face between the curtains, and bowed to the assembly with an air that was meant to be gracious. But this grimace was acknowledged only from the boxes, the ground floor remaining silent. Richelieu had wished to create the impression that he did not fear public opinion where his play was concerned, and its production, in consequence, had been made free for all men to behold. He now began to regret this decision, but it was too late. And, of a truth, the atmosphere of this assembly, so impartially gathered together, was decidedly chilly, although less frigid, it must be confessed, than that of the "Pastoral Tragedy" it had been brought thither to witness. In vain the stage shepherdesses, covered with jewels, straining on the points of their toes, with crooks in their hands, adorned with profusion of ribbons, and hooped petticoats duly festooned with flowers, succumbed to love's languishments in tirades of never-ending verse: in vain the "Perfect Lovers"—an ideal creation, peculiar to that epoch—refused all nourishment, and met their self-appointed ends in solitary caves, deploring their own deaths for all to hear, with ribbons in their hair the favourite hue of their inamo-

ratas ; in vain the ladies of the Court, in their enthusiasm, leant out of their boxes, in a state that bore flattering resemblance to a faint. The audience down below remained impassive, with no other sign of life than the slight perpetual swaying of long lines of dark heads. The Cardinal was seen to bite his lips during the first and second acts ; and the silence in which the last two were received had such an effect that he half raised himself out of his seat, motioning to all his Court acquaintances to mark the most perfect passages, and lead the signal for applause. One or two of the boxes feebly responded, but from the " groundlings " not one sound arose. The matter had resolved itself into an affair between the stage and boxes, in which they obviously declined to participate. Whereat the man who held the whole of Europe in the hollow of his hand, looked down upon the little mass of men below him who actually had dared to refrain from recognition of his literary genius, with yearnings in his heart similar to those of Nero, longing that the necks of all his citizens might be reduced to number one.

But all at once the sombre-looking crowd began to rouse, and, to the great astonishment of the Cardinal and all the boxes, a great round of applause burst forth. Once again the author leaned forward, to bow his appreciations, but paused abruptly on realising that this demonstration was disturbing even the actors in their performance. The curtains of the King's box were drawn aside, that he might behold the cause of this enthusiasm. The Court leant forward in breathless suspense, and now amid the seats surrounding the stage a slight youth was seen to make his appearance, as though seeking for his place. All eyes were turned in his direction—a fact which seemed to embarrass him considerably, judging from the manner in which he tried to conceal himself in the folds of his scanty cloak. " The Cid ! The Cid ! " roared the crowd, half frantic with applause. Whereat the disconcerted Corneille took refuge within the wings, and silence reigned once more

The Cardinal, in a frenzy of rage, ordered the curtains of his box to be drawn, and himself to be removed into the galleries of his Palace.

And now a scene occurred that Joseph had carefully prepared before leaving Paris, instructing his adherents to that end with elaborate precautions. Cardinal Mazarin made his appearance, declaring that the simplest method of transporting His Eminence was through the long glazed window, rising only two feet from the ground, and leading into his apartments from the box. The window was opened, and the pages skilfully passed the chair through the gap. Immediately a hubbub of voices arose, proclaiming the fulfilment of the prophecy of Nostradamus. Whispers were heard on every side: “ ‘ *Le Bonnet Rouge* ’—that is Monseigneur; ‘ *quarante onces* ’—that must be Cinq-Mars; ‘ *tout finira* ’—of course that was de Thou!* Providence has done its work! The future, as well as the present, is in the hands of the Cardinal Duke!”

Richelieu's chair was now wheeled along the huge resplendent galleries, to the accompaniment of the sweet sounds of this new strain of flattery; but there was not one of these acclamations he would not gladly have exchanged for a single heartfelt gesture from the crowd he had just left. Even a cry of hatred would have been welcome, for cries of any kind can be dealt with and extinguished, whereas silence is a weapon impervious to revenge. This attitude of public hostility followed him, inarticulate as a ghost, and it was not till he had arrived within the heart of his own Palace, surrounded by his Court of trembling sycophants, that the memory began to be effaced of the astounding apparition of a certain section of mankind bold enough to refuse their admiration to his presence. He took up his position in the centre of his vast apartments like a veritable king, gazing around, in careful estimation of the amount of power by which he was surrounded—power that he could behold and wonder at. The heads of all the greatest

* See Page 269.

families, Princes of the Church, Presidents of all the Parliaments, Governors of Provinces, Marshals and Generals-in-Chief, Papal Nuncios, Ambassadors from divers lands, deputies and senators of various republics, there they stood, ranged all around, attentive to his every word. Not a look that dared to meet his own, not a word that dared to raise itself in opposition, not one plan that dared to formulate itself in secret, not one thought that did not owe its birth to one single master mind. The whole of Europe represented in this single room, dumbly awaiting his commands. From time to time he would raise an imperious voice, and throw a word of satisfaction in the midst of this circle of gathered pomp, much as a wealthy man scatters small coin at the feet of the impoverished multitude. Nor was it difficult to discern the recipients of these marks of favour, for their faces would be lit up by pride and joy, and they in turn would be subject to the sudden marks of adulation reserved for those whom Fortune has admitted to the ranks of power, though the Cardinal himself would hardly deign to be aware of any circumstance so trivial. The King's brother and the Duc de Bouillon were standing amidst the crowd, a fact which the Minister had as yet not deigned to recognise, merely remarking in his conversation on the necessity of dismantling certain places grown too strong for the public weal, and dwelling at much length on the need for new pavements and quays in the Paris streets. He also bestowed a couple of words on Turenne, to the effect that he might now be dispatched to the army in Italy, there to continue his search for a Marshal's truncheon.

While Richelieu was thus engaged, bandying about in his powerful hands the greatest and most trivial events in Europe, in the midst of a babbling crowd, the Queen was being warned in the Louvre that the hour had come for her visit to the Cardinal's Palace, where the King had elected to await her arrival, after the performance of the tragedy. The serious Anne of Austria was never known to be present at the production of any

play, but she was unable to refuse the invitation of the Cardinal to his fête, and she was now in her oratory, ready to depart. She was covered with pearls, her favourite ornament, and was at the moment engaged in putting the finishing touches to the toilet of her favourite, the little Duchess of Mantua, in front of a long mirror. The young Princess, in a long rose-coloured dress, was looking at herself critically, though the expression on her face was slightly tinged with boredom, and even sulkiness.

The Queen really regarded Marie as her own responsibility, and was filled with apprehension at the fatal moment, now drawing near, when her short-lived peace of mind should cease, knowing as she did the girl's true character, which was sensitive at heart, for all her gaiety. Ever since their conversation at Saint Germain, and the writing of the fatal letter, she had never left the young Princess's side, and had spared no pains to try and lead the young girl's mind into that path which she herself had traced for her. For the most outstanding characteristic of Anne of Austria was a certain kind of indomitable obstinacy, on which she would base every calculation, and to which she would submit all passions and events with geometrical exactitude ; and it was, no doubt, this positive and inflexible trait in her character, which was responsible for all the evils of her Regency. The sinister reply of Cinq-Mars, followed by his arrest and trial, had all been hidden from the Princess Marie, whose only fault had been her own youthful pride, together with a moment of forgetfulness. But the Queen was good at heart, and had bitterly repented of her premature note, containing such grave words, the consequences of which she had done her utmost to avert. Reviewing her own actions in relation to the welfare of France, she approved herself for having rooted out the germs of a civil war which would have shaken the State to its foundations ; but she had only to draw near her little friend to realise the blight about to come into her life, with an aged King upon a throne for her only compensation ; and she had

only to think of the utter selflessness and abnegation on the part of a young man of twenty-two, on the verge of becoming the first power in the land, to realise Cinq-Mars for the man he really was, and pity Marie all the more, from the bottom of her heart.

She would at least have made an effort that the boy's worth should be appreciated by the girl he loved so well ; but who as yet had failed to realise his depth of character ; but at this moment she still hoped for his deliverance by the confederates assembled at Lyons, and once she heard of his safe arrival in foreign parts she would keep nothing back from her dear Marie.

The latter had begun by dreading the war, but surrounded as she was by the Queen's adherents, and only allowed to hear news dictated at her Majesty's pleasure, she believed, or thought she believed, that the conspiracy had been abandoned ; that the King and the Cardinal had returned to Paris, almost simultaneously that Monsieur had rejoined the Court after a brief absence ; that the Duc de Bouillon, by his relinquishment of Sedan, had also returned to favour ; and that the absence of the Master of the Horse was solely due to his more pronounced hatred of the Cardinal, and his greater share in the conspiracy. But ordinary good sense and a sense of common justice, both told her that, having acted under orders of the King's brother, her lover's pardon would not be long delayed after that of the Prince. And so her first uneasiness of mind had been allayed, and nothing now remained but a certain resentful pride against Cinq-Mars's indifference in failing to let her know the place of his retreat. Why, the Queen herself and all her Court were left in ignorance, while all her thoughts had been for Cinq-Mars's safety ! So Marie told herself. For the past two months, moreover, balls and functions had trodden so fast on one another's heels, with all the numerous duties they involved, that no time was left for reflection or self pity, unless it be the hour of her toilet, which found Marie more or less alone. Every

evening in bed, she would religiously embark on a train of thought concerning the inconstancy and base ingratitude of man, deep and original reflections peculiar to every young person in love for the first time ; but sleep would always intervene and prevent their being brought to a conclusion, and, wearied with dancing, the girl would close her large dark eyes in slumber before the ideas within her mind had time to shape themselves into recognisable form. And then she would wake up once more surrounded by ladies of the Court, and, whatever her frame of mind, forced to appear again before the Queen, where she would continue to receive the ceaseless solicitations—softened by time into familiarity—on the part of the Prince Palatine. The Polish suite had by now had ample opportunity of accustoming the Court of France to that mysterious reserve and eloquent silence so dear to the heart of women, since no secrets are so precious as those perpetually preserved, and no suitors so admired as those that dare not even suffer audibly in the presence of their charmer. Marie was regarded as dedicated to King Uladislas, and it must be confessed that she herself had grown so accustomed to the idea that any other woman upon the Polish throne would have seemed to her a monstrous anomaly. The prospect of a crown did not contribute in any way towards her happiness ; nevertheless she was pleased to accept in advance the homage that should be hers one day. Moreover—though this was not acknowledged in her heart, of hearts—she had greatly magnified the fancied wrongs on the part of Cinq-Mars towards herself as set forth by the Queen that day at Saint Germain.

“ You look as fresh as one of the roses in my bouquet,” said the Queen to her. “ Are you ready, child ? And why this naughty little pout I should like to know ? Come and let me fasten your ear-ring for you. How do you like this topaz necklace ? Would you like another necklace ? ”

“ Oh no, Madame, I think I ought not to be wearing

jewellery of any kind, since no one knows better than yourself how dreadfully unhappy I am. Men are so cruel to us, are they not? I keep thinking over what you have told me, and I see the truth of it all more clearly every day. It is quite true that he can never really have loved me at all; for if he had loved me he would have abandoned a scheme which gave me so much cause for pain, as I once explained to him. And I remember above all," she continued with a little air of self-importance, and even solemnity, "how I called him a rebel! Yes, Madame, I did indeed! I called him a *rebel* that day in the church at Saint Eustache! But now I see that Your Majesty was perfectly right. I am a most unhappy girl! For I know now that his ambition was greater than his love." And a tear of vexation was seen rolling down the child's cheek like a pearl on a rose.

"There is no doubt of it whatever," she went on, clasping her bracelets as she spoke, "and the proof of it is that two months have passed since he relinquished his plans (for you yourself told me of your efforts to save him), and he has never once sent to let me know where he is, and I the whole time was left weeping for him, and imploring Your Majesty on his account; begging and praying for the least word that would give me news of him, and with no other thought in my mind; and even now not a day passes but I refuse the offer of the Polish crown, because I wish to show how faithful I can be, how my affections are stronger far than his, when even your attempts to weaken them have failed, and how we women are superior to men. All the same, I see no reason why I should not be present at the fête to-night, especially as it cannot be called a ball."

"Yes, yes, dear Marie, make haste and come with me," replied the Queen, only too glad to stop the flow of these remarks containing sentiments inspired by herself. "We will witness for ourselves the harmony which has been established between the Princes and

the Cardinal, and who knows but that we may also hear some good news ? ” Therewith they departed.

When the two Princesses made their way into the long galleries of the Cardinal's Palace, they were distantly saluted by the King and his Minister, who were seated at a little low table playing at chess, surrounded on all sides by a silent throng of courtiers. The ladies in the Queen's suite, following in her train, dispersed themselves about the various rooms, and soon the sound of soft music arose as a pleasant accompaniment to various confidential conversations.

A young and newly-married couple passed in front of the Queen and bowed to her. They were the beautiful Duchess of Rohan, and Chabot, her happy husband, and their one desire seemed to be to escape the crowd and be alone with one another. They were the observed of all observers, and the smiles that followed them were not unmingled with envy, though their happiness reflected on the faces of all those that gazed after their departing figures.

Marie followed them with her eyes. “ You see they are happy after all,” she murmured to the Queen, harking back in her mind to the day when their names were coupled with so much reproach.

But Anne of Austria made no reply, and fearing lest a chance word overheard in the crowd should be fatal to her little friend, took up her position with her behind the King. Almost immediately she was surrounded by Monsieur, the Prince Palatine, and the Duc de Bouillon, all of them apparently in a free and light-hearted frame of mind. Nevertheless, the second of the three gentlemen could not refrain from a severe and scrutinising look bestowed upon Marie with the words “ Madame la Princesse your beauty and good spirits this evening are simply *astounding* ! ”

She was somewhat taken aback by these words, and even more by the sombre manner in which he took his departure ; she then spoke to the Duc d'Orleans, who did not reply and affected not to hear her. Marie then

looked at the Queen and could not help noticing her pallor, and the disturbed expression on her face. As for the Cardinal, nobody dared to approach him as he sat at the chess-table, pondering his next move. Mazarin alone leant over the arm of his chair, following his every movement with a fawning assiduity, and making gestures of admiration every time Richelieu made a decision. For the moment, the cloud on the Cardinal's face seemed to have disappeared; he had just managed to manipulate Louis's king into a position of "stale-mate," whereby the ivory monarch was deprived of the power to move either forwards or backwards. The Cardinal raised his eyes towards his opponent with a curious one-sided smile, as though appreciating the full import of the situation. Having duly observed the dying countenance and dull eyes of the Prince in front of him, he leaned towards Mazarin with the whispered remark:

"I' faith, I believe he will start for the next world before I do! He is tremendously changed."

But even as he spoke the words he was seized with a violent fit of coughing, and wracked with a pain which was only too familiar; accustomed as he was to this sinister warning, he raised his handkerchief to his lips and removed it again blood-stained; but having cast the handkerchief out of sight under the table, he gazed sternly around him as though to defy any sort of apprehension.

Louis XIII., without the slightest signs of animation, remained still as a statue while once more he started to reassemble his pieces on the board. His emaciated fingers were trembling, and it almost seemed as though these two men each on the point of death, were staking their last hours on a final match.

At this moment a clock struck midnight, and the King looked up.

"Aha!" said he in an icy tone, "when that same hour was being struck this morning our dear friend M. le Grand was passing through a bad moment!"

A piercing cry was heard at his side. The King trembled and turned away abruptly, upsetting the chess board as he did so. Marie of Mantua was lying fainting in the arms of the Queen, and the latter, weeping bitterly, turned to her husband with the words :

“ Ah, Sire, that cruel axe of yours has had a double edge ! ”

Whereon she embraced the young Princess and tended her like a mother. All the ladies of the Court crowded around Marie, who was roused from her faint only to shed floods of tears. No sooner had she opened her eyes :

“ Alas, my poor little girl,” said Anne of Austria to her, “ My poor little girl . . . Now, indeed, you are Queen of Poland.”

* * * * *

It is a by no means unfrequent occurrence that the happenings within the walls of a palace, productive of so much woe, are the cause of mirth without, for never yet have the populace learned to dissociate festivities from merriment. For five days now, the town had been celebrating the Minister's return, and every evening the citizens had swarmed around the windows of his palace and those of the Louvre. The recent disturbances had served to stimulate their interest in public events, and they would hurry from one street to another with a curiosity sometimes insulting and even hostile ; at times they would be seen marching in long silent processions, while at other times giving vent to loud outbursts of shouts and laughter, apparently devoid of any meaning whatsoever. The squares would be filled with bands of young men all fighting one another, or dancing wildly round in circles in the public places, as though prompted by some unknown impulses of hope or joy disturbing to the mind. But it was a significant fact that the only places really sad and silent were just those spots prepared by the Cardinal's orders for the purpose of rejoicing, and the illuminated spaces in front of his

own palace were passed by in evident disdain. Here and there the silence would be broken by an ironical voice reading and re-reading the fulsome legends and inscriptions with which some obscure and sycophantic writer had furnished the portrait of the Cardinal Duke. One of these portraits was guarded by musketeers, whose efforts had been unavailing against the stones which some unknown hand had thrown. This particular portrait represented Richelieu in military garb, with his helmet surrounded by laurels, and underneath it the inscription :

“ Grand duc ! C’est justement que la France t’honore,
Ainsi que le dieu Mars on t’adore ! ” *

* “ Two things the people of Paris adore,
The Cardinal Duke and the God of War.”

(This portrait is still in existence)

But the beauty of the whole failed to persuade the populace of Paris that it was really happy ; it was a long way from adoring either the Cardinal Duke or the God of War, but none the less it accepted his festivities as a pretext for rioting. Paris was pervaded throughout by rumours, while long-bearded men with torches in their hands and jars of wine slung over their backs, chinking against tin drinking cans, patrolled the streets arm in arm, singing together in their coarse rough voices, an ancient ditty of the League :

“ Reprenons la danse,
Allons, c’est assez :
Le printemps commence,
Les rois sont passés.

“ Prenons quique trève,
Nous sommes lassés ;
Les rois de la fève
Nous ont harassés.

“ Allons, Jean de Mayne,
Les rois sont passés.”*

* One of the old songs of the Civil Wars.

These formidable bands of men, shouting the words at the top of their voices, would make their way through the streets of Paris, jostling the peaceable citizens against the high walls of the old houses of that day. Two youths, wrapped in their cloaks, were thrown up against one another in this manner, and a recognition took place by the light of a torch placed at the foot of the newly-erected statue of Henri IV., beneath which they happened to be standing.

"What! You here in Paris again, monsieur?" exclaimed Corneille to Milton. "I thought you had returned to London."

"Monsieur, do you hear these people? Do you hear them? What is this dreadful refrain they are singing:

"Les rois sont passés!"

"Nothing much as yet, monsieur. Listen to what they say."

"Parliament is dead," said one man to another as he passed on his way. "And the nobles, our masters, are dead too. Let us dance while we may, for we are our own masters now. The old Cardinal will soon be dead, and there will be nobody left but the King and ourselves."

"Do you hear what that wretch is saying, monsieur?" demanded Corneille. "There you have the whole spirit of the age within one sentence."

"And all the work of a man whom you, and other countries too, are pleased to acclaim as *great*! I cannot understand him."

"Later on I will try and explain him to you," replied Corneille. "But in the meantime listen to the end of a letter that I have received this very day. Let us draw near to this lantern underneath the statue. We are alone now, for the crowd has drifted past. Listen:

"Some enterprises, however boldly planned, are doomed to failure. Our attempt to rescue MM. Cinq-Mars and de Thou has failed through circumstances unforeseen. We

should have known that, being prepared, through much meditation, to meet their death, they would refuse the help we brought them ; but this idea had come to none of us. In the hurry of our preparations, we made the fault of dispersing ourselves too widely among the crowd, which prevented us from acting on any sudden resolution. It was my misfortune to be placed close to the scaffold, from where I witnessed the advance of our unhappy friends, supporting between them Abbé Quillet, destined to behold the death as well as birth, of his young charge. The old man was sobbing, and had but strength to kiss their hands. Whereat we all pressed forward, ready to throw ourselves upon the guards at the signal, as agreed. But, to my grief, I beheld M. Cinq-Mars cast his hat away from him, with a gesture of disdain. Our movements had been noticed, and a strong guard of Catalonians was at once placed around the scaffold. I could see no more ; but I heard the sound of weeping. After the trumpets had sounded three times, according to custom, the Criminal Recorder, on horseback close to the scaffold, read out the death sentence, to which neither of them listened. M. de Thou was heard to say to M. de Cinq-Mars :

“ ‘ Which of us two friends, think you, should be the first to die ? Do you remember Saint Gervais and Saint Protais ? ’ ”

“ ‘ As you shall decide, so let it be,’ was the reply of Cinq-Mars.

“ Whereon the second confessor turned to M. de Thou and said, ‘ You are the elder.’ ”

“ ‘ That is so,’ M. de Thou did answer, and turned again to M. le Grand, with the words :

“ ‘ Generous soul that you are, is it in your mind to show me the way to the glories of eternity ? ’ ”

“ ‘ Alas,’ replied Cinq-Mars then, ‘ I have shown you, rather, the way over the precipice. Yet let us take our final plunge with stout and generous hearts, and rise once more in Heaven’s eternal joy.’ ”

“ After which he embraced his friend, and mounted the scaffold with a light quick step, to the surprise of all beholders. He walked around the platform, observing the multitude assembled below, with a resolute expression, from which all fear was absent. His bearing was grave and full of graciousness ; once again he walked around

saluting the people on all sides. He did not appear to recognise any of us, his friends, but his look was full of majesty and charm. Then he knelt, eyes raised to Heaven, and communed with his Maker ; as he kissed the crucifix, the priest cried out to all the people to pray God for his soul, and M. le Grand, with arms outspread, and afterwards with clasped hands, still holding the crucifix between them, made the same appeal. Then, with a good grace, he knelt on his knees beside the block, on which he laid his head, raising his eyes once more to Heaven, and asking his confessor :

“ ‘ My father, is this how they would have me be ? ’ ”

“ And then, while they cut off his locks of hair, with upward gaze he sighed :

“ ‘ Father in Heaven, of what is this world made ? My hour of torment has now come. I dedicate it to Thee, oh Father, in satisfaction for my sins. ’ ”

“ ‘ What are you waiting for ? What do you do there ? ’ ” asked the executioner, who was standing by, but had not yet pulled forth his axe from his evil-looking sack.

“ His confessor then drew near, and handed him a medal, and Cinq-Mars, with a tranquillity of spirit scarce to be believed, begged his confessor to hold the crucifix before his eyes, which he desired should not be bound. I could see the two hands of old Abbé Quillet as he held the cross in front of him. At this moment, a voice, clear and pure like that of an angel, was heard intoning *Ave, maris stella*. Amid the general silence I recognised the voice of M. de Thou, who was standing close to the scaffold. The people repeated the sacred words after him. I saw M. Cinq-Mars clinging to the block, and then an axe appear, made after the fashion of an English axe. A general groan from the populace now testified the deed was done, and Cinq-Mars's head was severed from his body. I am thankful to say I still had the strength to think upon his soul, and offer up a prayer for him, mingled with the pious words pronounced so bravely by our friend, de Thou. And then I saw de Thou himself mounting the scaffold with a step so rapid it was almost like a flight. Together with the priest he recited the psalms, and the words came from his lips with such seraphic rapture, it was as though his soul were borne already on its way to Heaven. Then, kneeling, he kissed the blood of Cinq-Mars, as that of a holy martyr, and seemed to want no more but to join the band of martyrhood himself. Whether God will

afford him this mercy I know not, but to my horror, I beheld the headsman, doubtless frightened by the first blow he had struck, bring down his axe on the top of his victim's head, where the unfortunate young man's hand had rested. The people uttered dreadful cries, and surged towards him : the wretched headsman struck a second time, and this time only grazed his victim and brought him to the ground, from whence he was finally dispatched. And now a strange happening occurred to add to the horror of the multitude. The old servant of M. Cinq-Mars, who had stood at the bottom of the scaffold, holding his master's horse by the bridle, as at a military funeral, had witnessed the fatal blow, and no sooner had it fallen, than he was stricken to the ground, to rise no more.

" I write you this account in haste, on board a boat from Genoa, whither I have repaired together with Fontrailles, Gondi, d'Entraigues, Beauvau and de Lude. We are on our way to England, there to remain till time has delivered France from the monster we ourselves have not been able to destroy. Never again will I enter the service of the cowardly Prince who has betrayed us all.

" MONTRÉSOR."

" And thus we see," continued Corneille, " the end of all those gallant young men but recently so full of power. Their last sigh has been offered up on the altar of ancient monarchy. Hereafter we shall be ruled by a Court and nothing but a Court. The aristocracy and the Parliament are dead."

" And this man of yours who claims to be so great," demanded Milton. " What has he done with his power? Having destroyed the principle of kingly government, does he intend to establish republics for the future welfare of his country ? "

" No need to probe into the future," replied Corneille. " His one desire has been to reign until his death. It is for the present he has worked, and the future can take care of itself. He has continued the work that Louis XI. began, and neither of them have known what they were doing."

The Englishman began to laugh.

"I never thought to see the day," he cried, "when genius should be known by such a sign! The man has overturned the very thing he wanted to sustain, and still commands your admiration! I pity you and your country."

"Pity us not," cried Corneille vehemently. "A man may pass, but a people renews itself for ever and for ever. This man, monsieur, has been gifted with a store of energy that nothing could extinguish; it was his imagination led him astray. But reason yet will triumph and confusion have an end."

The two youths—both of them great men already—were walking as they talked along the square dividing the statue of King Henri IV. from the Place Dauphine, and now they paused a moment.

"Let me tell you, monsieur," continued Corneille, "that the longer I live the more I realise my countrymen's response to any generous thought. See how the poor, from very gratitude, prostrate themselves before that statue of a worthy king. Who knows what other monuments the future may not hold in store for us, the fruit of passions of another kind? Who can predict the end of a people that love glory still? Who knows if on the very stones we tread, a symbol may not yet arise, a tribute to our triumphs in the East?"

"The future alone can reveal these things," replied Milton. "I, too, admire your countrymen with all their passions. But still I fear for their welfare, and I fail to understand them when I see the way they lavish admiration on unworthy rulers. Love of power is a childish thing. Your tyrant has been prey to such a lust, and yet unable wholly to achieve it. A master bowed beneath the yoke of tyranny himself! Fit food for merriment! This Colossus of yours is utterly devoid of balance, so much so that the finger of the merest boy has gone near to overthrow him! And you call that genius? Never! If he must needs leave higher regions for a human passion, let him at least attack it with success! If this Richelieu of yours

really wanted power above all else, why could he not grasp it by the root, instead of leaving it in the hands of a monarch so weak that the wind could blow upon him where it listeth? For my part I go to seek a man as yet unknown to fame. The lust for power is in him, too, yet I believe he will achieve heights unattained. His name is Cromwell."

THE END

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